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# **“From Thanatos to Eros”**

## **A Phenomenological Case Study of Post-Graduate Drama Students**

**By**

**Adrian Jesse James**

**A PhD Thesis**

**City University London**

**School of Arts.**

**Centre for Adult Education**

**Submission Date: July 2010**

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I would like to dedicate this study to the memory of my grandfather, William Patrick Ruddy, whose love was unshakable.

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## **Declaration**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis focuses on the lived experience of a group of post-graduate drama students as they undergo a one year vocational Master of Arts in Acting at a major London Drama School. It attempts to understand why mature and well qualified adults sacrifice financially rewarding and secure employment in order to train for an industry in which they have little chance of even a subsistence level of paid employment in the years following graduation.

The project was conducted from a non-positivistic basis where knowledge, truth and reality are seen as the subjective, context-bound, normative and political products of a social community, and not as the value-neutral products of a disinterested researcher. The research design was based on a series of 14 extended semi-structured interviews with current and ex-students, formal participant observation over a period of a year, and both formal and solicited documentary evidence covering a four year period.

The epistemology is phenomenological. It is a descriptive, hermeneutic, longitudinal, single case study and a reflexive commentary on the research process.

Data are presented in two forms; firstly through themes and elements in relationship to the relevant literature, and secondly as a drama-documentary screenplay, charting the experience of the students as they progress through the course.

The findings suggest that the participants are searching for self-actualisation through personal integrity and a creative purpose.

The research proposes that face-to-face relationships, reflexive and sensitive pedagogy, a permissive, non-judgemental 'safe space' and the disciplined development of the histrionic sensibility through the study of action is productive in developing individuals able to self-actualise and flourish creatively within the increasing demands and conflicting ideologies of a highly competitive creative industry.



# **Chapter One: INTRODUCTION**

## 1.1. The Rationale for this Study

I have been involved in the training of actors for thirty years. Prior to that time I was an actor myself. Since 2002 a training course I had been leading for a number of years became the first purely vocational Master of Arts in Acting to be accredited by a university in the United Kingdom, to be rapidly followed by a number of others in the scramble of the traditional conservatoire drama schools to survive changes in funding policies.

I have been increasingly aware, as I continue to train more and more actors every year, of the insecurity of the acting profession, both in terms of job security which doesn't exist, and the delicate and insecure nature of actors themselves. It is this awareness which has led to the central question, or seeming paradox, of this research, namely: *Training to be an actor as a mature student is financially costly and personally demanding with little chance of even a subsistence level of paid employment in the years following training; yet every year increasing numbers of highly educated and often professionally qualified high achieving adults sacrifice secure employment, money, comfortable accommodation and relationships in order to train. Why do they do this?* What motivates them? What sustains them? What do they go through? How do they cope? Do they consider the experience to have been worthwhile? Allied with these questions are my own vested interests, personally and professionally. What has been the value of my work? What has been its personal, utilitarian, spiritual, existential value for me and for those that I have helped to train?

The training process the students followed when the course became a Masters course changed only marginally. But the 'official' vocabulary of learning and teaching in the course document and students handbook changed in accordance with current thinking in Higher Education, transforming a more idiosyncratic language handed down

through men and women of the theatre since the early part of the last century.

I hoped the changes might bring more transparency and accountability to acting training and I also hoped it would not emasculate the power, authenticity, rigour and passion of the work of many fine teachers and the apprenticeship nature of training, which had been possible within the established conservatoires.

I was also aware that I needed to free myself from my own accustomed structures of thought if I was to adequately defend what I believed to be vital in the creative training of actor-artists. My focus which has guided me through many years involvement in the craft of acting was a fascination with human behaviour. I had never been a particularly good actor. I was a better director and teacher, having understood the problems inherent in the actors' work, but what drives my enthusiasm is to understand human motivation, presumably in order to understand my own. Foucault suggested that the motivation for such interest is *"...not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what it is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself..."* (Foucault, 1985; p.8), and he continued, *"...There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all..."*. That was the genesis of this thesis.

I had trained as an actor as early as I could; I was seventeen, and trained for three years. The training affected me profoundly. Participants on the researched course are mature, have already graduated from university and some have pursued and experienced successful careers in other fields. But possibly most significantly, the context in which actors now work and the society which it is the artists' job to reflect, have changed immensely.

So the following study is qualitative research into a short and intensive professional education. Its purpose is to gain a greater insight into, and understanding of, a specific vocational acting training as experienced by the people undertaking it. The aim of the study is to examine the processes and nature of this professional learning experience and to illuminate the motivations, expectations and consequences of the training for participants.

This research project has been a passionate and personal affair as I believe any artistic and creative enterprise should be. I have been led by a desire to understand more profoundly the nature of my work both as an artist and a teacher.

### **1.1.a. Context of the Programme**

Empirical research into occupational and professional socialisation in the United Kingdom has tended to focus on schools and higher education, work places, the established professions and vocations, particularly medicine, nursing, the church, art schools and dance education. Little research has been carried out within a drama school on the processes of the cultural transmission of professional knowledge from the point of view of the trainee actors, and yet there were over 26,000 applicants for drama school entry in 2005 (Conference of Drama Schools/UCAS Statistical Research Project 2005 data). The Conference of Drama Schools Directory of Courses (2007-08) outlines 26 degree courses purely in acting; there are nine Master of Arts in Acting courses and many others (both Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts) in closely related areas, such as Musical Theatre, Classical Acting, Directing, Training Actors, Acting for the Media. There are also numerous acting courses which are diploma courses awarded by the drama schools themselves, and others recognised by Trinity College London, awarding diplomas and certificates. There are over 2000

university courses in the United Kingdom with either 'performance', 'theatre' or 'drama' in the title.

Training as an actor is becoming ever more popular, if popularity is to be judged by the seeming exponential growth in training courses and the growth in the number of applications to courses, despite the common knowledge of the huge unemployment figures within the entertainment industry. According to Skillset (Sector Skills Council for the Audiovisual Industries, Performing Arts Industries Report 2005),

*"Nearly half of those working in the UK performance industry earned less than £6,000 from the profession in the last year and most spent more time working outside the performance industry than they did within it. Seven in ten (71%) had worked outside of the performance industry for 28 weeks or more in the past year. This compares to the 18 weeks on average worked in the performance industry itself. Two in ten (22%) had worked for 40 weeks or more in alternative industries. The majority (48%) of those working in the past year had an income of less than £6,000 from the performance industry with only 6% earning £30,000 or more. Men (9%) were more likely than women (4%) to have earned £30,000 or more from work in the industry in the past year."*

Even if these figures are not accurately known to those applying for training, the general trend, I believe, is commonly understood and outlined to the students at their auditions and clarified to them during the training.

My suspicion is that the popularity of actor training may be related to its primary nature, in that it is essentially training for a craft which is still understandable and requires 'doing', a process involving imagination, intuition and creative ability. As Lave (1993) argues, most professional training has involved the distancing of skills from self-actualisation and investigation into this area may contain insights into the relationship between knowledgeability and identity. The knowledge required of an actor is internalised and tacit knowledge. The acquisition of professional knowledge of the actor as an artist is the process of the discovery of his or her own instrument as the student



actor recognises and responds to a language of sensation, a form of Bakhtin's social language (1986), which is individualised. This process may entail the student's discovery or re-discovery of the sensation of being inside themselves (as opposed to a feeling of alienation); the recognition of the legitimacy and authenticity of their own body, thoughts, will, feelings and emotions and the ability to trust and embrace them as their own.

Focusing on a one year full time M.A. training which has a particular intensity and importance for the students (due to its time constraints and expense, together with the future insecurity of the domain for which they are training), this makes it a particularly rich area of study for enculturation and cognitive development. J.V. Wertsch ends his monograph, 'A Sociocultural Approach to Socially Shared Cognition' (Wertsch, 1993) by stating, *"...we need to formulate issues under the heading of socially shared cognition in such a way that concrete empirical studies can be conducted that do not reduce the inquiry to the exclusive language of a single discipline..."*. I hope this research contributes to such a dialogue.

Regarding the context of contemporary acting training, one observes: the disappearance of the provincial repertory system (which was traditionally the actor's apprenticeship training ground, where 'beginners' could 'tread the boards and learn the trade'); the growing conservatoire training (consisting of apprenticeship teaching, master classes and professional practice) and the involvement and absorption into Higher Education (with the attendant awarding of academic degrees and the subsequent challenges of finding satisfactory assessment criteria and processes); the increasing economic and commercial pressures from the 'leisure and cultural industries' (which curtails and discourages risk or experimentation in favour of usable skills); and perhaps most importantly, the increasing number of graduating acting students, year on year, passing through increasingly

diverse Diploma, B.A. and M.A. courses (4,600 in Graduate Spotlight 2008), and the severely limited possibilities for employment in their field of expertise after training. Given this context, my hope is that this study may contribute to an understanding of some of the reasons why students embark on training and their subsequent perception of themselves-in-the-world that they gain from engaging with and internalising one such education.

## **1.2. The Period of Data Collection**

The data collection for this research project took place during the period 2005 to 2007. Documentary evidence covered the years from 2003 to 2007. Formal observation took place during the academic year 2005-06, and the interviews were conducted during the period April to November 2006. Student documentation was collected from the School of Acting records. Observation took place at the premises where the M.A. course has been situated since 2004.

## **1.3. A Chapter by Chapter Synopsis of this Thesis**

### **1.3.a. Chapter Two: The Context of this Research Study**

This chapter contains contextual material specifically related to the studied course and the literature-based rationale for the processes, methods and techniques used on the studied course.

Formal acting training is a comparatively recent phenomenon in Europe. The influence of Stanislavski was slow to permeate through to British drama schools, but was firmly established by 1969 when the Conference of Drama Schools (CDS) was formed to maintain and develop standards of vocational training. The 1980s saw the move towards incorporating the major conservatoires into the Higher

Education sector. Post-graduate courses flourished during this period as a source of income for the schools, and fast-track training for mature students. The major challenge of behavioural realism is outlined. The statistics emphasising the underemployment and contingent nature of the actor's career paths are indicated.

### **1.3.b. Chapter Three: A Review of the Preparatory Literature Informing this Study**

In *Chapter Three* I review the literature which has informed my thinking and contextualised this study. After a description of how I accessed the literature I begin the chapter with a definition of representational acting and an overview of the works of the major influences which inform the theory and practice of Behavioural Realism, the style of acting taught on the researched course which contextualises and informs the underlying basis of this research project.

I follow this with a discussion on how the nature of professions and professional knowledge informed my research and I discuss knowledge acquisition and learning in relationship to actor training, my research questions, my methodological stance and the presentation of my findings.

In reviewing the literature, the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, the Neo Vygotskians and the conceptual framework of Situated Cognition, provided me with scaffolding on which to build and allowed me to frame and focus my major research questions and to explore and articulate ideas of personal autonomy and the development of self-identity and self-expression.

My review has focused on work with a strong psychological basis and has suggested that a phenomenological approach to my study would be most relevant.

### **1.3.c. Chapter Four: My Research Paradigm, Design and Methods**

As a result of my literature review my research questions focus on my participants' lived experience of the course. *Chapter Four* examines my methodology and resulting research design, methods, data management mechanics, data collection, data analysis and presentation of my findings.

### **1.3.d. Chapter Five: A Discussion of my Findings**

In this chapter, the generated themes and their constituent elements emerging from hermeneutic reflection and eidetic reduction of the data analysis of interviews, written documentary evidence and observations are presented and discussed. This is a presentation of the findings attempting to reveal the essence of the participants' lived experience of their training in relationship to the relevant literature.

### **1.3.e. Chapter Six: "From Thanatos to Eros" [A Drama-Documentary Screenplay]**

This screenplay documents in twenty-nine scenes the experiences of a group of post-graduate students. It is wholly derived from the research data and uses participants' own words from the interview and documentary evidence, re-contextualising them to create the script in a synthesis attempting to highlight the intensity of their lived reality. The characters are anonymised students from the researched course.

### **1.3.f. Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Recommendations**

This chapter presents my conclusions as they relate to wider questions, in particular, *how does the researched course enable students to*

*realise their personal and artistic potential, and survive as an integrated person within the highly competitive professional industry for which they are being trained?* It considers the significance and implications of my findings for other vocational training and suggests recommendations and clarification of the limitations of this study together with further questions regarding research into this area.

Following this chapter, a reflexive essay on my personal journey through the research process titled '*A Struggle for Comprehension*' can be found in *Appendix 1* (after the bibliography).

**Chapter Two:**  
**THE CONTEXT OF THIS RESEARCH STUDY**

## **2.1. Introduction**

In this chapter I describe the historical and cultural context of the case study. I begin with an historical overview of acting training and the place of the researched course within the School of Acting. I then outline the challenges of behavioural realism which underlie the curriculum, before describing the curriculum and its assessment and feedback procedures and outlining the general employment context. This chapter contains contextual material specifically related to the studied course and the literature-based rationale for the processes used within it.

### **2.1.a. Historical Overview of Drama Schools with Particular Reference to the United Kingdom**

Although actors in the United Kingdom have for centuries undergone a form of apprenticeship training, there was little systematic actor training anywhere in Europe or the USA until the beginning of the twentieth century. Unlike Eastern cultures which have had disciplined forms of training for their performers for centuries – Japanese Noh theatre, for instance, dates from the fourteenth century, training children from the age of four and the Kathakali dance theatre of southern India boasts a tradition which takes their performers from six to ten years to learn, beginning training at thirteen years old.

Far from being associated with art, aesthetics, or the transmission of culture, actors in Great Britain have traditionally been associated with heresy, criminality and sexual promiscuity. Rogues, thieves, vagabonds and prostitutes have been the traditional epithets associated with performers in Britain from medieval times.

At the turn of the nineteenth century a new consciousness swept through Europe with the triumph of scientific rationalist thought.

Industrialisation had apparently conquered nature, and with increasing technology all questions about the natural world were seen to be answerable. Karl Marx had talked of the 'iron laws of nature' which could be understood and predicted; Freud looked into the souls of men and women in an attempt to discover their fundamental workings and the idea of 'objective' scientific research gained wide acceptance and influence. At the same time and not co-incidentally, gas light flooded the stages of Europe and Russia, emphasising the bodies and faces inhabiting the boards and negating the necessity for stylised gestures and ritualised attitudes. Actors, directors and producers began to search for a new 'objective' language which could encompass the new naturalism which was now necessary on stage and increasingly on film. Konstantin Stanislavski, in Russia, was the pioneer, investigating with a nineteenth century Darwinian sense of observation and a profound understanding of the actors' psychology, the nature of behavioural realism. His work was published, his company of actors played in the United States of America and his influence and his 'system' have reverberated ever since, throughout Europe and America, in every theatre studio, school and theatre laboratory.

England did not take quickly or happily to the Russian master's ways and means to train actors. Frank Benson's London School of Acting had opened in 1901, focusing on the elocution of Shakespearian text, and in 1904 Beerbohn Tree formed a theatre school which developed into the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Elsie Foggerty, who trained at the Paris Conservatoire with Frank Benson, founded the Central School of Speech and Drama in 1906, concentrating on correct pronunciation and the use of the voice. Rose Bruford, another pioneer of the British tradition, concentrated on the 'art of speech'. Michel Saint-Denis founded the Old Vic Theatre School in 1946, more influenced by the ideas of Copeau than Stanislavski.

By the time the ideas of Stanislavski and his followers began to form



part of the sensibilities of an actor's work, particularly seen in England via films from the United States, the majority of British training establishments were firmly middle-class institutions, with bourgeois values focusing on improving the speech, manners and deportment of young men and women, and determinedly resisting ideas from America as Britain began to economically recover and culturally re-form an identity after the Second World War.

By the late 1950s the comfortable conformity of British drama school conservatoires, led by the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art, was beginning to be upset and upstaged by radical changes in British theatre, notably the 'angry young men and women' at the Royal Court Theatre in West London and Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop at Stratford in East London.

By the early 1960s, two radical new drama schools, espousing powerful and influential ideas, new to traditional British drama training, Drama Centre, London, and East 15 Acting School, had opened their doors to a new generation of drama students. Local Authority funding was available for training and the ideas and methods of Stanislavski, Michael Chekhov, the American Method, Bertolt Brecht, and Jacques Copeau, slowly ebbed into the British drama training establishments.

In 1969 The Conference of Drama Schools (CDS) was established by the major drama schools themselves, including both of the 'new' arrivals, to contribute to maintaining and developing standards of vocational training within its member institutions. In 1974 the National Council for Drama Training (NCDT) was established by the performing arts industry to ensure vocational standards for acting training through inspections and an accreditation process.

With the demise of L.E.A. funding during the 1980s, after twenty years of comparative financial ease, drama schools fearfully began a two way

courtship with the universities, hoping for funding and desperately concerned with both loss of autonomy and the possible academicisation of their vocational courses. Some central government funding in the form of Dance and Drama Awards (DADA) were instituted in 1999, together with nationally accredited qualifications. By the millennium most major drama schools had converted their three year diploma courses into B.A. courses, many with arguably only positive changes to their curriculum. One year post-graduate training (which has traditionally had a chequered history of legitimacy as a full vocational training) had begun to transform into performance studies M.A. courses, with a thesis/performance basis. Professional, educational and government inspectorates were now inspecting recognised courses for efficiency. The M.A. in Acting course at ArtsEd, validated by City University, London in 2002, was the first purely vocational acting M.A. in the UK, closely followed by M.A. courses at Mountview School, The Central School and The Rose Bruford Academy.

Students completing validated and recognised courses from British drama schools are automatically awarded membership of British Actors Equity Association and are included in the Graduates Edition of 'Spotlight', the British actors' directory. Many courses include a 'showcase' to agents as part of the training, and all courses have public productions at the end of the training to which agents, producers and other industry professionals are invited.

### **2.1.b. Historical Overview of Post-Graduate Acting Courses in Great Britain**

Over the past fifty years, most recognised major training courses for actors in Britain have traditionally been of three years duration. This has obvious administrative benefits, particularly in the past, regarding the acquisition of L.E.A. educational awards and has kept acting training in step with music, art and academic courses of the same level.

During the late 1970s, one-year post-graduate courses began to be introduced into the conservatoires, ostensibly fast-track and intensive courses for mature students with prior professional experience. This was a difficult concept for many of the specialist tutors, used to conventional three year training courses with young, inexperienced and most often open and vulnerable students, who were suddenly faced with mature, demanding and often highly educated students conversant with the British education system. For the drama schools, with one year post-graduate money still available from local authorities, the courses were an excellent and necessary source of income. For many mature students, unable to afford three years in training, or not wishing to spend three years 'under wraps', a one year course of training was a viable alternative.

During the 1980s and the demise of local government funding for drama students, the post-graduate courses proved a valuable and often a vital source of income for the schools; one year of independent funding being more possible than three years for an applicant. Over the past twenty years, one year post-graduate courses have become firmly established, although still often viewed as being 'second best' rather than as an 'advanced' form of training. Vested interests, ideologies, differing methods and value systems of training and the complex nature of quality assessments make un-researched comparisons

between courses extremely subjective.

With the affiliation of the major drama schools into the Higher Education sector in the 1990s, post-graduate courses have multiplied, become more specialised and some have developed into full time M.A. courses.

## **2.2. The Researched Course: An M.A. in Acting**

The researched course began as a one year post-graduate training company in 1988, when the then Drama Department of the School of Performing Arts was based in the City of London. When the department moved to join the other departments in West London, the post-graduate course retained its city base. When the course was re-located to west London for the academic year 1993-94, the head of the course resigned. I was appointed as Course Leader and re-started the course with a new curriculum and staff but retained the aim of the course as a Stanislavski-based training for mature students. The course also stated that actors will develop most successfully in a group with *“...a communal work ethic and mutual respect for each other...”* and *“...the principle that each actor will develop their innate potential through having a safe space in which to take bold creative risks...”* (The Prospectus, 1994).

The student cohort for the first year was sixteen and it was divided into two groups for most classes, or into individual tutorial sessions. Classes ran from 9.00 a.m. until 9.00 p.m. with an hour for lunch and an hour's break between 5.30 – 6.30 p.m. Evening sessions, which were invariably scene study classes and rehearsals, were gradually curtailed over the years. The academic year 2000-01 included no full evening sessions. The course was divided, as it remains, two terms of training and one performance term, where a Summer Season of plays were

mounted in repertoire at an external theatre venue, including The Riverside Studios, The Lyric Hammersmith, and The New End Theatre, Hampstead. The course was re-accredited by the NCDT in 1995 and became a recipient of DADA national awards, through Trinity College recognition as a National Certificate in Professional Acting course. For a two year period, 1999-2001, the post-graduate students were incorporated into the final term of the third year of the three year course for their production term, but this was abandoned. Screen acting training was incorporated into the course from the academic year 2000-01.

In 2002, with no major changes to the curriculum, the course was accredited as an M.A. in Acting by City University, London. The course relocated to its present accommodation, the Catholic Centre, due to increasing student numbers, for the academic year 2004-05. Final M.A. student theatre productions have been produced in the School's own theatres on the main site since 2006.

### **2.2.a. The Catholic Centre**

The Catholic Centre, just off the High Street, in this affluent west London suburb, is an early 1980s two-story redbrick parish social centre of unexceptional design, situated almost opposite its large Victorian mother church and a late Victorian public library. It is unpretentious, open and low-tech. The street beyond the centre is tree-lined and the large detached Victorian houses are well established flat conversions or imposing individually owned family houses. It is a professional, middle-class residential area with an attractive High Street abounding with cafes, restaurants, quality shops, banks and estate agents.

The Catholic Centre is at present the main base for the M.A. in Acting course. The school rents four studio spaces, a small office and balcony storage space, five days a week during the academic year. The course,

with 27 students, was moved from the main building on a trial basis for the 2004-05 academic year, since increasing cohort numbers on both the three year and one year course was proving too difficult to accommodate in the main building, less than ten minutes walk away.

### **2.2.b. The M.A. Course: Values and Course Aims**

A Stanislavski-based training of the actor's technique forms the core of the M.A. in Acting course. One of the stated objectives of the course is to produce '*Cultural Architects*', defined as "...a person of creative, independent thought who is self confident and mentally strong; a leader, a person who grasps the overall picture of their professional and cultural vocation and is prepared to influence attitudes and shape the future..." (M.A. Course Document, 2002), through the axioms that "...the study of the art of acting is first and foremost a study of humankind...(and) that that the work of the actor is to reveal the potential of the human spirit and the realities of the human situation..." (ibid.).

The five course aims listed in the Course Document and Student Handbook are:

- To produce artists of integrity, discrimination, taste and determination.
- To inspire actors to take bold, creative risks and to prepare them to go beyond the confines of their perceived limitations as artists.
- To develop a rigorous and more profound understanding and use of the actor's psycho-physical techniques.
- To extend the actor's ability to combine their inspiration and instinct with a disciplined mastery of their technical resources.
- To extend the actor's understanding and appreciation of their role as cultural architects who have a unique responsibility for reflecting and shaping the society they portray.

The Course Document and Student Handbook state two core values and attitudes with which the training wishes to imbue the students, namely:

- A highly developed respect for the uniqueness of the individual within the context of a group and a joy and trust in their own creativity.
- An advanced understanding of professional discipline, which... involves a total commitment of the individual to the creative enterprise.

The M.A. in Acting course curriculum is firmly embedded within the tradition of Stanislavski's Behavioural Realism (Stanislavski, 2008; Chekhov, 1985 & 1991; Copeau 1990) and which views acting as a vocation with a moral and spiritual value as well as a craft and skills training, *"...The study of the art of acting is first and foremost a study of humankind. The work of the actor is to reveal the potential of the human spirit and the realities of the human situation..."* (M.A. Student Handbook).

### **2.2.c. An Introduction to the Challenges of Behavioural Realism which underlie the Course Curriculum**

Through the character of the narrator Tom, in his play 'The Glass Menagerie', Tennessee Williams (1948) defines the great challenge of acting, namely that *"...a stage magician gives you illusion in the form of truth, an actor gives you truth in the form of illusion..."*.

Shakespeare expresses the central challenge of the actor in Hamlet's advice to the players,

*"...Is it not monstrous, that this player here,  
But in a fiction, in a dream of passion,  
Could force his soul so to his own conceit,  
That from her working, all his visage waned,*

*Tears in his eyes, distraction in's aspect,  
A broken voice and his whole function suiting  
With forms to his conceit? And all for nothing?..."*  
(Line nos.1591-1597; First Folio, 1623)

Shakespeare here defines the essence of the actor's problem. He sees it as '*monstrous*', in other words as *unnatural* or as a *human deformation* that by "*...a fiction...a dream of passion...*", by *imagination*, or *psychological means*, his physicality is affected, indeed, his *whole being is transformed* for a purely imaginative objective. This statement echoes one of the central axioms of Stanislavski's observations that there is no psychological change without physical change and no physical change without psychological change, underlying the centrality of the psycho-physical nature of acting, it is lived, experienced reality.

Stanislavski devoted his life to a *method* of creativity, a series of conscious techniques, through which the unconscious creative drives could be released.

Jacques Copeau (1990) suggests that the central problem of the actor is an embodied one, the very fact that he is standing on the stage. Describing a performance of Eleanor Duse, the method teacher and director Lee Strasberg illustrates Copeau's statement, that "*...she became the vehicle for the idea of the play...*" (Strasberg, 1987; p.18).

Sanford Meisner (Meisner and Longwell, 1987) famously defined acting as "*...living truthfully under imaginary circumstances...*". If we incorporate transformational acting into his definition, living truthfully *as another unique individual* under imaginary circumstances, then add the conditions under which the actor necessarily performs this task, on demand, while being closely scrutinised under stressful conditions, we begin to see the profound enormity of the actor's task and the



grotesque contortions, in direct opposition to the natural organic reactions of a human organism, to which a person must adapt and train themselves if they are to become an actor. A moment's thought will suggest the countless things an actor may be called upon to do in the course of their work which as a private person they would recoil in horror. An actor must be prepared to reveal the most private parts of themselves if they are to portray truthfully the complexities and varieties of human life. A related problem is the difficulty of identifying the actor from the act, the objective of naturalism being to disguise its technique, to appear without artifice, to appear 'real' or 'normal' (Williams' "...*truth in the form of illusion...*"), while at the same time the phenomenological problem of the actor is how to be both themselves as a craftsman, a controlled technician, and also to be the character they are portraying.

Acting is not a thing that can be learned or taught. It is more helpful to view acting as a transitive verb, a process of situated becoming. A moment's interruption to this coming-into-being breaks the spell and the truth becomes a lie in that instant. It is this high wire act which is the true craft of the actor-magician, transforming truthfully felt experience, moment to moment.

Acting, then, is the process of an extraordinarily complex and unique engagement between an individual's physical, psychological, emotional and spiritual makeup with the external world, combined with a practical understanding of the techniques of communicating their creative discoveries on a stage or through the recorded media.

The challenge for the actor trainer, I believe, is to encourage and stimulate an actor's vocabulary of the elements that are observable as components of the process of acting and thereby re-sensitise the actor to an awareness of the truth of their own being. That is the teaching of an actor's *inner technique*. The techniques of communicating the inner

technique, which are dependent upon the medium (the stage or recorded medium), belong to *outer technique*.

I would suggest that the central challenges of learning and teaching Behavioural Realism may be stated as being:

- The discovery and use of the self
- The challenge of self-consciousness
- The appearance of artlessness

## **2.2.d. The Structure and Curriculum of the Course**

The structure of the M.A. course attempts during the first two terms (each of twelve weeks duration) to facilitate the student's analysis, understanding and mastery of the challenges of behavioural realism through graded and guided practice of inner technique and outer craft skills. This is, essentially, the work that Stanislavski (2008) referred to as the actor's work on themselves. Rehearsal techniques, research on the role and script analysis, Stanislavski's work on the role, are studied simultaneously. In the final term (of fourteen weeks duration), the work is tested in the form of fully mounted public productions with professional guest directors and the making of short films through the Acting School's film and television department, together with classes in professional employment skills. The students are also given seminars and lectures from industry professionals at the end of their second term on the employment, business and management aspects of the acting profession.

In the introduction to the Course Structure, the Course Document (2002) states, *"...The curriculum is tightly structured, systematic and developmental. A highly disciplined and rigorous approach is taken to the training, re-defining and tuning the actor's physical, vocal and imaginative resources. The essential discipline, however, is not the outer imposed curriculum structure, but the inner struggle of each*

*individual actor to discover the truth of their own being. The total commitment of individuals to their own personal discovery process is indispensable to the course...".*

The course rationale (Course Document, 2002) states that *"...The course seeks to develop in the actor the ability to research, experiment, test, extend, reflect and process the art in themselves, within an atmosphere of rigorous constructive criticism. The course provides a safe space which is non-competitive and encouraging of artistic and creative risks, where the student is guided by specialist tutors and directors..."*.

### **Term One – Beyond the Persona**

Within the Course Document, the outline of the first term called 'Beyond the Persona' is prefaced by *"...The soul is a vast domain..."*, a quotation from the 19<sup>th</sup> century Viennese playwright Arthur Schnitzler (2008). The overview of the term states that,

*"...The students are given the opportunity to examine the actor's instrument – themselves. Objectively and without judgement they explore who they are, what they are and the processes and dynamics which created their own being. This is the time to deepen their exploration of the nature of their own emotional, physical, vocal and imaginative mechanisms and therefore those of others. In order to discover their damage and their ineffable beauty they may need to reclaim a belief in the truth of their own experience; to reclaim their own sensations and to understand what those sensations are and how they are affected by them; to understand that their work as artists demands the revelation of the human spirit, not the imitation of human behaviour.*

*At the same time the students are exploring in depth detailed and specific methodologies of text-analysis and character creation, while the technical development of the actor's vocal and physical resources are being extended and refined.*

*This is the term when an ensemble is being formed. The opportunity to experiment and fail in safety is essential to the*

*work of the group...". (Course Document, 2002)*

The term is divided into six modules: Module One being Induction Week; Modules Two to Four being taught modules, running simultaneously through the term; Module Five being the student's own 'Actor's Journal'; and Module Six being a 'Critical Appraisal', which is designed to be written during the Winter Break as part of the reflective analysis of the course.

Module Two consists of inner and outer acting techniques and work on a role, divided into three elements:

- The Object Exercise Class
- Behavioural Characteristics
- The Rehearsal Exercise (contemporary scenes)

Module Three is concerned with the expressive body and is divided into:

- Dance for Actors
- Alexander Technique
- The Transformation Class

Module Four is concerned with the expressive voice and consists of:

- Voice for the actor and
- Singing for the actor

At points during the last two weeks of the term, 'showings' of the students' work in their Rehearsal Exercise, Dance, Transformation and Singing classes are arranged for their tutors to view; the other classes being private developmental work, the results of these would be expected to be revealed through the showings.

## **Term Two – The Process of Creation**

The second term is substantially similar in form to the first term, with the addition of screen technique classes (replacing the behavioural characteristics classes), and the addition of business and professional preparation classes. The rehearsal exercise focuses on Shakespeare and the work is conducted at a progressively deeper level. The student handbook emphasises that *“...the corporeal challenges, which are spiritual as much as material, are the main basis of the second terms work...”*.

## **Term Three – Performance**

The third term, called Performance, is prefaced by an aphorism attributed to Mies van der Rohe, *“...God is in the detail...”*, and the following outline of the requirements of the actor during this term includes the injunction that *“...creation implies doing what has not been done before and demands the unique response of a unique individual...”*. During this term the modules consist of film (video) production, public performances, professional employment skills classes, and the writing of a critical re-assessment and professional development plan.

### **2.2.e. Assessment Strategies and Student Feedback**

#### **Procedures**

Throughout the course students are given on-going assessments of their progress through a number of mechanisms, formal and informal:

- Classwork: continual assessment by their tutors/directors
- Formally assessed rehearsal exercises: double marked by two internal examiners
- Written work: double marked by an internal examiner and checked externally.

- Video performances: double marked by two internal examiners
- Theatre performances: triple marked by three internal examiners

An external examiner monitors the screen and theatre performances to ensure that agreement is reached between the internal markers.

## **2.3. The Employment Context**

The notorious underemployment of the acting profession has been well documented and the following quotation sums up the situation for contemporary performers in Great Britain,

*“...Nearly half of those working in the UK performance industry earned less than £6,000 from the profession in the last year and most spent more time working outside the performance industry than they did within it. Seven in ten (71%) had worked outside of the performance industry for 28 weeks or more in the past year. This compares to the 18 weeks on average worked in the performance industry itself. Two in ten (22%) had worked for 40 weeks or more in alternative industries. The majority (48%) of those working in the past year had an income of less than £6,000 from the performance industry with only 6% earning £30,000 or more. Men (9%) were more likely than women (4%) to have earned £30,000 or more from work in the industry in the past year...”. (Skillset, 2005)*

The above statistics give no indication of the quality of the work engaged in by performers which can vary massively, ranging from world class theatre productions to advertisements for beauty products, corporate videos, appearances on a T.V. soap or drama series, commercial or independent film productions, actor-subsidised fringe theatre in London, Brighton or Edinburgh, commercial tours, school tours, and a variety of related work, hospital role-play, exhibition hosting and street charity work.

Work for most actors, most of the time, is random, contingent, unreliable and most usually poorly paid. Most actors have little or no

power over the course of their working lives.

## **2.4. Summary**

In this chapter I have described the historical development and cultural context of this case study together with contextual material specifically related to the studied course and the literature-based rationale for the processes used within it. I have situated the researched course aims within the tradition of a spiritual and moral purpose as defined by Stanislavski as “...dedicated to the highest ideals of ensemble art, good citizenship and public education...” (Banham, 1989), suggesting that one of the central challenges of learning and teaching Behavioural Realism may be seen as being the discovery and use of the self.

In the following chapter I review the literature which has informed this study. After a description of how I accessed the literature I begin the chapter with a definition of representational acting – Behavioural Realism – the style of acting taught on the researched course which informs the underlying basis of this research project. I then discuss how contemporary literature on acting training informs this study. I follow this with a discussion on how the nature of professions and professional knowledge informed my research, and I discuss knowledge acquisition and learning in relationship to actor training, my research questions, my methodological stance and the presentation of my findings.

**Chapter Three:**  
**A REVIEW OF THE PREPARATORY LITERATURE**  
**INFORMING THIS STUDY**



### **3.1. Introduction**

This study charts the experience towards personal transformation and self-actualisation of a group of mature students on a one year Master of Arts in Acting course. It examines how the experience of the training reconstructs their ways of seeing themselves in the world. Central to this account is the nature and craft of acting, acting training and the specific training processes in which the students were engaged.

I began this study with a number of related questions regarding the students' experience of the training they were undertaking. I wished to understand more fully the factors that underlay their decision to train, how their experience of training related to the training course's stated aims and what effects the training had on them and their subsequent lives.

In this chapter I review the literature which has informed my thinking and contextualised this study. After a description of how I accessed the literature I begin the chapter with a definition of representational acting (Behavioural Realism), the style of acting taught on the researched course which contextualises and informs the underlying basis of this research project. I then discuss how contemporary literature on acting training informs this study. I follow this with a discussion on how the nature of professions and professional knowledge informed my research, and I discuss knowledge acquisition and learning in relationship to actor training, my research questions, my methodological stance and the presentation of my findings.

#### **3.1.a. Accessing the Literature**

In order to conduct a preliminary literature search and to orientate myself to the subject I decided on the following subject search:

- Education/Sociology and Psychology
- Vocational and Professional training/preparation (the church, police, sports training, social work, therapists, nurses & medicine)
- Adult learning
- Adult arts education
- Apprenticeship
- Educational anthropology
- Actor training

My key words and concepts:

- Adult student experience
- Adult learning (theories)
- Cognitive Apprenticeship
- Expert practice
- Transformational learning theory
- Reflective thought/cognitive development
- Self identity/self expression/authenticity/personal development
- Actor/performance/arts training

I used online databases to define my research project, to understand how it relates to the current literature and to develop my research design.

I began my general search with OPAC (Online Public Access Catalogue) for relevant bibliographies. I accessed the main educational and sociological databases for indexes and abstracts and catalogues (The British Education Index, ERIC, JSTOR, and the ISI Web of Knowledge) using the above key words.

My analysis of the literature explored and identified the following questions:

- What research has been undertaken in the area of analysing adult student experience of vocational training particularly in regard to the training of actors and their unique challenges?
- What theoretical and methodological underpinnings have been employed to research this area?
- What is the state of debate?
- Are there any outstanding issues or problems?

Using English language databases only and with a publication span from 1970 onwards I consulted the following databases for research articles:

- Science Citation Index Expanded
- Social Science Citation Index
- Arts and Humanities Citation Index
- Arts and Humanities Data Services (AHDS)
- British Education Internet Resources Catalogue
- Palantine – H.E.A. (Performing Arts Learning and Teaching Innovations Network)
- BUBL link (Recreational and Performing Arts)
- M25 consortium
- Intute
- British Library Catalogue.

My preparatory literature focused on how people gain professional and craft knowledge and the cultural context of self-identity. My search focused on the seminal authors on:

- Occupational socialization and vocational training (E. Hughes, Becker & Strauss)

- Socio-cultural approaches to education (L.S. Vygotsky, M. Bakhtin)
- The neo-Vygotskian approaches to Cognitive Apprenticeship and Situated Learning (J. Wertsch, J. Lave, E. Wenger, E. Goody)
- Actor training: Behavioural Realism, (K. Stanislavski, M. Chekhov, U. Hagen, J. Copeau, J. Littlewood.)

The literature which subsequently informed my discussion focused on

- The social, educational and artistic theories of J. Dewey, and the Existential Phenomenologists, the Critical Theorists, Interactionist theory, Feminist Theorists and Post Modernist theorists.
- The study of emotion and authenticity in the work of L. Trilling, A.R. Hochschild and C. Guignon.

I continue this chapter with a definition of representational acting and an overview of the work of the major influences which inform the theory and practice of Behavioural Realism which contextualises and informs the underlying basis of this research project, followed by notes relating to the contemporary literature on acting training.

### **3.2. Representational Acting (Behavioural Realism)**

Behavioural Realism (or Psychological Realism) is a form of the Performance Arts which imitates lived reality. It is rooted in the Enlightenment ideas of European Rationality and is part of the Naturalistic and Realistic tradition in the arts. It developed out of a growing dissatisfaction with the mechanistic and mannered formalism of much nineteenth century acting which being seen under the harsh glare of gaslight began to look increasingly false and unconvincing to audiences, especially with the new psychologically truthful and powerful sub-textual drama which was beginning to emerge in Europe by the turn of the century.

### **3.2.a. Konstantin Stanislavski**

Stanislavski (1863-1938) was the first great exponent of Behavioural Realism and his work and writing which, taken as a whole, span over fifty years, give a language to and codify an exceptionally coherent 'system' of ideas and principles concerning the nature of the art and craft of acting and a training process for actors (Stanislavski, 1936). The power and persuasiveness of his ideas, the success of his insight and understanding in practice, the empowerment given to actors by the application of his creative, open and profoundly personal methods of approaching themselves as an instrument, the character they are playing and the play in rehearsal and performance, has ensured his ubiquitous status as the founding master of all contemporary western training systems. His many adherents and critics throughout the last century have developed, altered, refined, re-interpreted and integrated other principles and ideas into the work, but Stanislavski's seminal analysis, formulated during the first part of the twentieth century, remains the only overarching and complete system of creative naturalistic acting available. It forms the basis of the training on the present researched M.A. in Acting course.

### **3.2.b. The Stanislavski 'System' or 'Method'**

Stanislavski's system of acting began to take form when he founded the Moscow Arts Theatre, together with the actor, director and teacher, Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, in 1897, "*...dedicated to the highest ideals of ensemble art, good citizenship and public education...*" (Banham, 1989). It was to have as its basis, acting discipline and an absence of a 'star' system.

It is a method of acting which may be learned, transmitted and applied in performance and was in constant evolution and development

throughout Stanislavski's life.

At the centre of his system is a belief in the psycho-physical continuum and a rejection of the Cartesian notion of a mechanistic mind/body dualism. For Stanislavski it is axiomatic that in every physical action there is a psychological component and in psychological activity, a physical element (Stanislavski, 2008), making reference to Theodule Ribot, the French psychologist, stating that one cannot have a disembodied emotion (ibid).

A second fundamental belief at the centre of Stanislavski's work is the idea of acting as a dynamic, organic process, a series of interrelationships between the actors and the audience, a living creative process, following the organic laws of nature (Stanislavski, 1936). He refers to creating consciously the conditions necessary for the flow of the unconscious, or in other words, for inspiration, or the 'creative unconscious'. This is the idea of the actor existing fully 'in the moment', or acting 'moment to moment', experiencing the truth of that moment. His use of the term 'experiencing' is taken from Leo Tolstoy, who asserted that felt experiences and not knowledge was communicated by art (Tolstoy, 1942).

Stanislavski's system is a highly developed psycho-physical method of training actors, the purpose of which is to make a conscious technique based on the perception and imitation of *human action*. It is primarily concerned with the actor's discovery, exploration and development of their own mind, imagination and emotions, freeing them as far as possible from the habits and limitations of their own history, culture, biography and personality. The intention is to form the actor's inner being into an instrument which is capable, as it were, of playing any melody. The actor is to learn a focus which allows them to respond within any imaginative world with a psyche which is both free and still

under disciplined control. Physical and vocal training are thus subjugated in the system to a secondary, though vital, position to the training of the *inner technique* of the actor.

Many of the seemingly mystifying terms and much of the difficulty in adequately translating Stanislavski's system, as well as many of the misunderstandings arising from his system stem from two problems. Firstly, the changing and developing nature of his work during different periods of discovery, leading to refinements and the use of more adequate terminology. Thus, much of the American Method School of acting, particularly the work of Lee Strasberg at The Actors Studio, was based on Stanislavski's early experiments on Affective Memory rather than on Physical Action which he emphasised later in his work.

Secondly, and more profoundly, difficulties, misunderstandings and many mystifications arise from the very nature of the dramatic sensibility itself, or Histrionic Sensibility, as regarded by Francis Fergusson in his seminal study "The Idea of a Theatre" (Fergusson, 1949). Fergusson argues that this sensibility, this *mimetic perception of* *action*

(Aristotle, Trans. Janko, 1987) is

*"...a basic, or primary, or primitive virtue of the human mind, [therefore] it is difficult to describe in other terms: and it can only be cultivated by practice. For this reason there is little literature about it except drama itself, though from time to time a lore is developed...When the theatre is cultivated, a lore of the art of acting is developed: and a few connoisseurs of the histrionic sensibility and the art of acting have tried to write down their observations...But it is necessary to emphasise the fact that a technique of acting...merely leads to the literature of drama, just as the performers technique of the violinist leads to the literature of the violin..."*

The nature of acting cannot itself be written down any more than acting can be learned by reading a book. It is a response, an experience, a sensation of the whole being, and can only be learned as

such. Thus acting is traditionally learned and taught through forms of apprenticeship, it is revealed directly and learned empirically through experience. Thus, Stanislavski wrote his great work “An Actors Work on Himself”, or as it is better known in English “An Actor Prepares” (Stanislavski, 1948), in the form of a type of Socratic dialogue, in which pupils, undergoing the training process, question, and are answered and guided by the master.

Stanislavski’s work, which is essentially phenomenological, requires to be interpreted and understood anew through and by each individual practitioner. Throughout his life and his writing he made it clear that his ‘system’ was only a guide and not a philosophy and that his only concern was to get closer to the nature of creativity (Stanislavski, 1936).



### **3.2.c. Other Major Influences Informing the Acting Techniques Related to this Study.**

Michael Chekhov (1891-1955), nephew of the playwright Anton Chekhov, studied under Stanislavski and became director of the First Studio at the Moscow Arts Theatre in 1924. A study of eastern philosophy led him to embrace Rudolph Steiner's anthroposophy and his system of acting turned towards mysticism and spirituality as opposed to the more grounded and psychologically and emotionally specific and comprehensible exercises of Stanislavski. Emigrating from the Soviet Union he developed his work at Dartington Hall during the 1930s in England, and in the forties and fifties at his own studios in New York and in Los Angeles, where he worked with a number of major film actors, among them, Yul Brynner, Marilyn Monroe, Anthony Quinn, and Jack Palance. His approach, designed to be highly spontaneous and working directly on the actor's imaginative resources is particularly helpful, when combined with Stanislavski techniques, for training actors in screen technique, where rehearsal time is very short and actors are required to make almost immediate adaptations regarding choices of physical and psychological actions and activities.

Jacques Copeau (1879 – 1949). Copeau's creative and artistic mission was to 'renovate' the French theatrical tradition by stripping away the accretions of the past which he believed had led to falseness, insincerity and a sophistication which had deformed performance and actors into inauthentic and unnatural grotesques. He eschewed commercialisation and the star system and advocated an ensemble of sincere, unaffected actors of intelligence and true spirituality. He wished to re-discover the spontaneous truths of sincere feelings by working in a simple, direct and honest manner and to this end he took his actors away from what he saw as the corrupting influence of the city to train in the natural surroundings of the French countryside. He founded the Vieux Columbier School, and his theatre in Paris was

stripped bare of sets, scenery, elaborate lighting and even the proscenium arch in an attempt to rediscover the direct relationship between the actor and the audience. (His ideas bear a relationship to the much later DOGMA Manifesto films in Denmark at the end of the twentieth century, which attempted to strip back to its essence, the nature of film, which the signatories felt had become corrupted by sophistication and falseness). Copeau wished to found a school based on the first principles and fundamental concepts of art inspired by the work of Stanislavski. His teaching, based on the education of the body, craft skills, vocal development and a general education, was based on the central idea of simple play and sincerity. He stressed the discovery of dramatic principles within each individual, embracing the naïve without interference from the intellect and developing an authenticity of psycho-physical responses.

Many of Copeau's influential principles and ideas were introduced and developed in England by his nephew and assistant, Michel Saint-Denis (1897 – 1971), who, after the Second World War, founded The Old Vic Theatre School, The Drama School in Strasbourg, The National Theatre School of Canada, The Stratford Studio of the Royal Shakespeare Company, and The Juilliard School of Drama in New York.

The work of Michel Saint-Denis in Strasbourg and The Old Vic School was carried directly into the work of the present researched course through Catherine Clouzot, a premiere student of Saint-Denis and the wife of the director and teacher, John Blatchely (1922-1994), the first principal of Drama Centre London, who developed Saint-Denis' work with Copeau in Animal Transformation, a disciplined and rigorous form of imaginative character improvisation based on the observation and understanding of animal physicality and the idea that the actor must *"...earn the right to move..."* (personal communication, C.C.), through an understanding of stillness.

Uta Hagen (1919-2004), who worked and taught with her husband Herbert Berghof (1909-1990) in New York from 1947, developed a series of Object Exercises, described in her book "Respect For Acting" (Hagen, 1973), through which many aspects of Stanislavski's system could be learned. These exercises were developed by one of her early students, Doreen Cannon (1930-1995) and brought to England, where she became Head of Acting at The Drama Centre, London, in the 1960s and 70s, and subsequently at RADA. The basic Object Exercises have been refined and developed over a period of years and have been used as the basis for teaching inner technique on the researched course since 1993.

Joan Littlewood (1914 – 2002) had a profoundly galvanising effect on British theatre in the 1950s and 1960s with her inclusive views on actors and the audience, her grounded and non-elitist approach to theatre and its radicalising power, and her direct, experimental and challenging work with actors based on the ideas of Stanislavski. She emphasised an actor's deep study of history and the social context of their roles; improvisatory and collective techniques, the inclusion of song, dance and group input into the creation of new works and a questioning of all cant, orthodoxy and accepted theatrical norms and values. She wished to found a peoples' theatre which would entertain and educate, and advocated a knockabout rough drama, disciplined, alive, vital and changing. The East 15 Acting School, founded by a long term member of her Theatre Workshop Company, Margaret Walker (Bury) (b.1922), had as its main *raison d'être* "...the retention of the working method...which was never set down, codified or systematised...". The school also "...wished to discover techniques through which an actor's performance would be consistent, night after night, a challenge unsolved by the work of Theatre Workshop..." (Personal communication, M.W.).

### **3.2.d. Contemporary Literature on Actors, Acting Training and its Relationship to my Research Questions**

Empirical studies of those engaged in the arts have tended to focus on the social and economic aspects of artists, actors and dancers, examining their working conditions or the determinants of their incomes, such as R.K. Filer's study of the earnings of artists in the United States (Filer, 1986), or Ruth Towse's studies of the economic and social characteristics of artists in Great Britain (Towse, 1992 & 1995). There is also substantial statistical information on employment figures of actors from their own professional bodies, such as The British Actors Equity Association and the Sector Skills Council (Sector Skills Council for the Audiovisual Industries, Performing Arts Industries Report 2005).

There has been a wealth of publications over the past twenty years of books dedicated to an understanding of the training process written specifically for students of acting. There is a vast international body of research on performance, performance techniques and developments in performance training, expanding the works of the founding masters and key twentieth century practitioners of European and American acting techniques, including publications such as those by Jean Benedetti (1982, 1998) and Bella Merlin (2001, 2005, 2007) on Stanislavskian techniques; Alison Hodge's (ed.) survey of acting training during the twentieth century (Hodge, 2000); and Ian Watson's (ed.) examination of how actors are trained in different cultures (Watson, 2001).

Previous empirical studies, performance research, and studies of performance techniques are tangential to this particular case study, which seeks to understand the lived experience of participants as they progress through a specific one year vocational acting course.

Having discussed the nature of the craft of acting as seen by the major influences on the taught curriculum of the researched case study and the relationship of previous research into acting on the present study, I will now discuss how the nature of professions and professional knowledge informed my research, and I will then discuss knowledge acquisition and learning in relationship to actor training, my research questions, methodological stance and presentation of my findings.

### **3.3. The Nature of a Profession, Professional Knowledge and Career Structure**

Acting is an occupation and preparation for this occupation is commonly regarded as a professional and vocational education.

Everett Hughes (Hughes, 1971; p.375), in describing a profession, suggests it is “...a vocation in which professed knowledge of some branch of learning is used...in the practice of an art based upon it...”, and asserts that a profession possesses the following elements:

Firstly, it delivers an Esoteric Service. This suggests that a profession involves the practice of a specific knowledge that has been gained through extended study, initiation and apprenticeship under those that are already members of the profession.

Secondly it has a licence to Institutional Deviation. This implies that as a consequence of their specialised and esoteric knowledge, professionals should be trusted in regard to that knowledge and allowed, with regard to professional matters, to deviate from the conduct expected from the general population.

The third element of a profession is the Close Solidarity of its members which constitute a particularised group with a specific ethos and implications of a lifelong commitment and deep personal involvement.

The fourth element of a profession is designated by Everett Hughes as Detachment. This refers to the nature of a profession having an intellectual basis apart from any personal vested interest of the practitioner, enabling each particular 'case' to be seen within a more universal setting. The balance between the particular and the universal, between personal interest and 'objective' judgement is a source of strain and conflict within all professions. Hughes suggests that this balance is often related to the theoretical and the practical, *"...Branches of learning are not always very directly related to the ordinary business of life..."* (ibid.; p.378).

Hughes also discusses two other traditional elements of a profession, namely the long (often up to seven years in the case of medicine and the law) training necessary for the practitioners, and the European notion of the 'Freie Berufe', the independent scholar, containing the notion that the true professional is never hired but has complete control over what they do, being merely engaged or consulted for a period of need.

Hughes' four elements of a profession closely ally the idea of the actor-artist with a professional practitioner. Actors certainly deliver an Esoteric Service, involving the practice of a specific knowledge, if not always gained from extended formal study, certainly gained from apprenticeship from those already members of the profession and given appropriate opportunity, gaining increasing competence from practice. Artists, including actors have a certain allowance of institutional deviation, being allowed to define the boundaries of their craft and, within the limits of their craft, being free from the censorship of language and actions of their society. However, this freedom can be

arbitrary and may be, and is, removed from time to time, dependant on the political and social contingencies of the moment. It is a delicate and fragile balance constantly being negotiated. Actors certainly have Close Solidarity, both through trade organisations and perhaps more importantly, through personal relationships, borne of the insecurity both of the nature of the employment and the nature of the actor. Detachment, implying a muse or '*histrionic sensibility*' (Fergusson, 1949) is a vital part of the actor's world, against which they are constantly being compared or comparing themselves. Actors have traditionally been self-employed, free agents having control over what they do – the problem is not for the actor doing it, but being engaged (and paid) to do it.

Hughes' discussion of medical education (Hughes, 1971) also raises a particularly interesting area pertaining to the education of actors which has enabled me to refine my research area. He refers to the way in which, through their education, a medical student, beginning as a lay person, is educated into the prevailing medical culture and must then, after initiation into the culture, interact with the lay population once again, bringing their newly acquired skills to bear, but in a new role, that of the medical practitioner. Part of medical culture, he suggests, is the learning to don a new role and interact with others accordingly. He views this role learning as an act of separation of the student from the lay world, and writes of it beautifully as "*...a passing through the mirror so that one looks out on the world from behind it, and sees things as in mirror writing. In all of the more esoteric occupations we have studied we find the sense of seeing the world in reverse...*" (Hughes, 1971; p.399). This interaction, this negotiation of different roles which he accepts as being part of the fabric of living in the world, appears more vivid, contradictory, sharply focused and paradoxically unconscious during the learning process, and he suggests that the complexity of the nature of the changing relationships during medical training makes for what he calls a marginal man, where identity and reference groups are

uncertain. He suggested, “...*We need studies which will discover the course of the passage from the laymen’s estate to that of the professional, with attention to the crises and dilemmas of role which arise...*” (Hughes, 1971; p.400).

Many studies have been undertaken since Hughes suggestion investigating the rites of passage from layman to professional and it is perhaps in this area that we have one of the greatest problems and contradictions of the actor. They are being trained to be artists and professionals, with a grasp of esoteric knowledge which requires practice in order to develop and grow within the art, but the world which they enter after their training is inappropriate to that growth and flowering. Hughes’ “*ordinary business of life*” (ibid.) for actors is a loosely coordinated set of economic interests and power relations under the title of the cultural and leisure industries. A profession, a craft, a trade, or little more than the traditional vagabond touting for business, the actor must negotiate their roles and relationships, their individual economic and external needs and desires with their creative dreams, their artistic competencies and their inner drives, within a society which cannot begin to accommodate their skills or talents, leaving the vast majority of them (particularly women) under-employed within their profession and marginalised for the major part of their active lives.

Acknowledging the seminal work on occupations carried out by Everett Hughes, Howard Becker and Anselm Strauss’ monograph ‘*Careers, Personality and Adult Socialization*’ (Becker and Strauss, 1956) examined the way in which adult identities are formed and changed through career movements (using an interactionist approach, influenced by the Chicago school of sociology). Symbolic Interactionism views professional socialization as a subjective and negotiated process where people are not only shaped and influenced by institutions but also create their own identities through their interactions and



relationships within the institutions.

Although Becker and Strauss were examining career movements and mobility mainly within occupations and beurocratic or organisational structures, their emphasis on adult identity is crucial to my own study, and they raise a number of issues which are particularly relevant as the researched course in this study is constituted, in the main, by people changing careers or moving on from a previous occupation.

Areas raised in Becker and Strauss' seminal essay which bear particular reference to research questions in the present study include:

- *"...noting the general or probable limits within which recruiting is carried on and the forces by which they are maintained..."*. Here, Becker and Strauss refer to the "less definite" career steps and paths of the artist, but the more *"...generally formulated notions of the 'artist', so that recruitment into the world of art often begins in high school..."*. In contemporary society, young adults are swamped with images of the lives of 'celebrity' actors, which may *"...determine the number and variety...from whom a particular occupation can recruit..."*.
- *"...quite often who teaches whom and what, is connected with matters of convenience as well as with prestige..."*. The authors are referring here to the relationship between *"...informal learning and group allegiance..."* and the possibilities of students being exposed, within a training or educational situation, to conflicting ideologies which may have profound consequences.
- *"...certain transmittable skills, information and qualities facilitate movement..."*. The question of what students believe it is important to know and how they make those decisions is essential in any study of student learning.

- Becker and Strauss' references to the jazz musicians who played in Chicago's Clark Street dives, who made little money and endured dreadful working conditions but had the freedom to play the music they loved rather than accept better-paying places which controlled their musical output, finds echoes in the many contemporary fringe and pub theatres in London and the situation of many young (and not so young) actors, raising questions regarding accepted value systems and notions of success and failure.
- Another group referred to by the authors, the taxi dancers, described by Paul Cressey (1932), bears a sad and familiar note over seventy years later, all too familiar to those acquainted with the contemporary entertainment business, revealing a pattern of occupation in which, *"...She enters the profession young and good looking and draws the best customers in the house, but, as age and hard work take their toll, she ends with the worst clients..."*. A start high, end low, work pattern which is still *"...a more common pattern of life, probably, than is generally recognised..."* (Becker and Strauss, 1956).
- The nature of the artists occupational 'career', described as *"...fairly specific in goal but diffuse in operational means..."* focuses directly on the actor's dilemma where to take a job in order to live may commit them away from acting, or to moving from *"...low job to low job..."*.
- The psychological stress accompanying career changes are highlighted in the study and the authors suggest that this is less when the person is not aware of the opportunities and dangers of such change. How far student actors are cognisant of something they have not yet experienced bears significance within the present study.

- The interdependence of careers crossing occupational lines, which is illustrated by Becker and Strauss in terms of young art dealers exhibiting the works of equally inexperienced young painters, hoping by this symbiotic relationship to build the careers of each other, finds a direct correlation with the situations of young directors, producers and performers, each subsidising the other, providing opportunities and audiences for each other when there is no paid work.
- The most significant element in Becker and Strauss' work in relationship to the present study is their statement that *"...central to any account of adult identity is the relation of change in identity to change in social position...change (development) is shaped by those patterned transactions which accompany career movement..."*. Becker and Strauss' understanding of identity as an unstable and constantly mutating set of relationships and their focus on career change has greatly influenced the major research questions in this research project.

### **3.4. Knowledge Acquisition and Learning: The Work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin**

My research interest in the nature of student learning and self identity led me to a concern with the cultural, institutional and historical context in which action is mediated and therefore to the socio-cultural approach to mind whose goal is to create an account of mental processes which foreground those aspects and assume that what is being described and explained is human action.

James Wertsch's study *'Voices of the Mind'* (Wertsch, 1991), and *'A Socio-cultural Approach to Socially Shared Cognition'* (Wertsch, 1993) in which he explores and develops the works of the great Russian psychologist, L.S. Vygotsky and the literary scholar Mikhail Bakhtin,

have been profoundly influential in formulating and understanding my research questions.

The work of Vygotsky, Bakhtin, and indeed Stanislavski, may be viewed as generating a theoretical basis and psychologically orientated explication of Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach* (Marx and Engels, 1969). Here Marx outlines his basis for Dialectical Materialism and states axiomatically the notion that there is no such thing as the abstract isolated human essence, and that it is essential to understand the social relationships within which the human being exists if we are to understand the individual (Theses on Feuerbach, VI & VII).

Vygotsky's notion of Mediated Action, Social Memory, Socially Distributed Cognition, the essential social nature of mind and his theory of the Zone of Proximal Development, together with Bakhtin's notion of Utterance (which refers to situated units of speech rather than de-contextualised words), Voice (a more 'incorporated' notion than 'role' which has connotations of something 'put on', like a theatrical cloak)\*, and Dialogicality (referring to the way in which we use different 'voices' and different ways of speaking and thinking dependent upon our concrete situation), have provided a basis for both viewing and understanding the learning process and development of the acting students in this research project.

*(\*) Bakhtin's "voice" incorporates the internal and external world in a way which the word 'role' excludes. This was, for me, a genuine difficulty with the fascinating work of Irving Goffman, whose theatrical metaphors became confusing for me, as his use of terms both coincided and conflicted with my view of the social world and my view of the actor's theatrical world.*

The pioneering work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin in the USSR in the 1920s and 30s, and the implications and subsequent developments in socio-cultural explanations of cognitive development in the West during and

since the 1980s, have been profound and are basic to the formative thinking and underlying argument behind this research and much of the cited literature within it. It is therefore worth outlining the major concepts within this notion of mind and the questions which have arisen in my own mind as a consequence.

### **3.4.a. Major Concepts from the works of Vygotsky and Bakhtin**

#### **Mediational Means**

Vygotsky distinguished between two major elements of mental functioning; the elementary and the higher mental functions. The elementary functions concerned the genetic line of natural development, understandable through biological principles. The higher mental functions, with which this study is concerned, are the conscious mental processes, thinking, reasoning, problem-solving, voluntary attention and logical memory, which he suggests are primarily products of our time and place in history and are mediated by technical and psychological tools. The main psychological tool, Vygotsky suggests, is language (Jacob, 1992). Other tools would include counting systems, writing, diagrams, pictures and works of art, music, television, films and photographs. Technical tools would include pens, sticks, instruments, computers and calculators. These 'tools' mediate between the inner world of the human being and the outer world, not as 'aids' to understanding, but transformers of the process and structure of the performed activity. Vygotsky would see the process of writing a letter on velum and sending it by post to a friend as not only a qualitatively different process from e-mailing a similar message to a friend, but as actively creating a different person through structuring different cognitive processes. Society and culture are seen as influencing mediational means on two levels. Firstly, through the nature of the technical tools it provides (e.g. pencils or computers) which facilitate the cognitive activity and create and maintain the

institutional and cultural contexts, and secondly through interpersonal activity, specifically language which is a socio-cultural activity.

We have access to particular psychological tools (language, counting, etc.) because we are part of a particular society, and those tools, Vygotsky suggests, organise our cognitive development in particular ways, specific to our socio-cultural milieu. Thus it may be said that *“mind extends beyond the skin”* (Wertsch, 1993; p.90). The relationship between the intrapersonal and the interpersonal is seen by Vygotsky as essentially a dialectical process, each influencing the other in a continual interplay and exchange.

The notion of mediated action, of how the things we use form our thinking, of how our thinking is intrinsically bound up with our relationship to things outside us, led directly to my research and interview questions regarding group dynamics, learning, and the relationship to the notion of social memory and socially distributed cognition (Wertsch, 1993), and questions regarding labelling and how identity is constructed in relationship to institutionalized settings and socio-culturally situated assumptions (Mehan, 1989).

The inter-functional relationship between different forms and structures of the spoken language and different thought processes led me to questions regarding the actor's process in 'line-learning' and the accompanying thought processes. Does this activity, over time, facilitate openness to a variety of different ways of conceptualising the world? – is this, indeed, a liberating process?

Vygotsky's notions regarding the influence of mediational means, corroborated by later research, such as that by Mehan (1989), emphasises the *'tool's'* power in structuring and organizing cognitive development spontaneously and unconsciously in such a way that the socially created tools are seen as products of natural forces rather than

of socio-cultural factors. This idea may be seen as bearing correspondence to an aspect of the Zen notion of 'illusion', which suggests that we divide and see the world according to how we use it, not to how it is. It also reflects the idea that the notion of completely 'bracketing' oneself as a researcher is unviable, as we *are* what we study.

Wertsch contends that if our relationship to the world is structured and altered by mediational means, created by various socio-cultural forces with differing agendas and for different purposes within localised settings, unintended effects are very likely to arise (Wertsch, 1991). My questions arising from the idea of mediational means concern the notion of intended and unintended consequences of the course being researched. Are the means used efficiently producing the outcomes desired or stated by the course? Husserl's notion of Intentionality, central to a Phenomenological approach (see 4.2.b), is crucial in illuminating this area.

## **Semiotic Potentials**

Vygotsky's notion of the semiotic potentials of language (Wertsch, 1993), through which he saw the possibility for language functioning only within its own terms of reference, as well as in a contextualized way (i.e. *"...as a sign type rather than as a sign token..."* (ibid.; p.92)), has powerful repercussions regarding modes of learning – particularly in acting training (or in any craft), which is essentially an activity which can be realised only through practice and only internalised subsequently through reflection and analysis. The language of acting training needs to produce a sensation, not an intellectual, de-contextualised understanding.

## **The Zone of Proximal Development**

Fundamentally related to the social nature of cognition is Vygotsky's 'zone of proximal development' (Jacob, 1992; p.308), which he

describes as “...the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving.....in collaboration with more capable peers...” (Wertsch, 1991; p.28). Differing forms of collaboration with “...more capable peers...” (ibid.) can, he suggests, create different zones of maximal development. Vygotsky’s powerful ideas, specifically relevant to the training of actors, have been extensively elucidated and enlarged, particularly with reference to child development, school learning and apprenticeship training, through the work of the Neo-Vygotskians and those working in the field of cognitive apprenticeship, referred to later in this chapter.

### **Bakhtin and language: Utterance, Voice and Dialogicality**

Working in the USSR at the same time, although separately, from Vygotsky, Bakhtin’s theories of language complement Vygotsky’s theories of cognition and Stanislavski’s theories of actor training, and have been influential in the concept and structure of this research project.

### **The Utterance**

Bakhtin wrote that, “...Speech can exist only in reality in the form of concrete utterances of individual speaking people...outside this form it cannot exist...” (Wertsch, 1991; p.50). His analysis of language therefore focuses, not on abstract semantics, but on “...the real unit of speech communication...” (ibid.). His concern was on the social situatedness of speech and its organisation in a socio-cultural context. Linguistic analysis, Bakhtin argued, decontextualises speech, and in doing so, kills its living concrete meaning. The central thesis of his works and central to the present study is that every ‘utterance’ (the site of situated performance) is merely a link in a chain of utterances



and cannot be divorced from other utterances, they are not “... *indifferent to one another, and are not self sufficient; they are aware of, and mutually reflect one another...*” (Wertsch, 1991; p.52). It is this idea, together with his concepts of Voice and Dialogicality, which has also influenced the form of the part presentation of evidence in this case study research **‘From Thanatos to Eros’** (Chapter Six), which is in the form of a documentary, self-consciously re-contextualising utterances in an attempt to generate a deeper understanding.

## **Voice**

Utterance issues from a voice, which in Bakhtin’s notion is a process, an activity which enacts differences in values. It is a speaking consciousness addressing another and cannot be divorced either from the addressor or the addressee but is part of a discourse which is aware of and mutually reflects the other. Thus voice involves listening as much as speaking, and meaning becomes an active process, not a static entity. Voice becomes a negotiated *relationship* between voices, responding to what has preceded it, which may be an immediate concrete precedent (the individual to whom one is speaking) or indeed an imagined indefinite other (for instance, one’s leader, ethnic group, God, parent, enemy or another aspect of oneself; one’s conscience, perhaps?). Whoever or whatever the other voice, there is always ‘addressivity’, the idea that utterances are inherently associated with at least two voices, the one who speaks and the one who is addressed. This is a concept which has crucial importance in the mutual negotiating process of interviewing and the analysis of interviews in this study, and leads directly to Bakhtin’s concern with what he terms Dialogicality.

## **Dialogicality**

Dialogicality underlies the concepts of voice and utterance and

emphasises the nature of language as being reciprocal and dialectical in nature, constantly influencing and being influenced by context; *“...to understand another persons utterance means to orientate oneself with respect to it, to find the proper place for it in the corresponding context...any true understanding is dialogic in nature...Understanding is to utterance as one line of dialogue is to the next...”* (Wertsch, 1991; p.54). This idea, corresponding to the idea of mediated action, suggests a basic notion underpinning the present research, which is that the writer (myself) cannot be fully ‘bracketed’ (in a Husserlian sense), as I am fundamentally involved and part of the nature of the dialogicality of the voices communicating with me. Of course, I can be aware of my own ‘baggage’, but, like an actor’s interpretation of a role, the work and the world, the mediational tools and the dialogic nature of language are so closely interwoven as to be part of each other.

Bakhtin’s critique of linguistic analysis, that it treats utterances as if they had meaning in and of themselves, echoes Stanislavski’s axiomatic notion in his ‘system’ when he declares that there is no individual in a general sense, only someone particular, at a specific time, and in a specific place (Stanislavski, 1936), emphasising the importance of given circumstances (Stanislavski, 1948) to any role.

## **Multivoicedness**

At the forefront of Bakhtin’s work on language was the question of the ownership of meaning and his view on this was not dissimilar to Lewis Carroll’s Humpty Dumpty who suggested that words meant whatever he wished them to mean (Carroll, 1965). Bakhtin’s view, however, was more dialectical than the mechanistic and egotistical Dumpty, and he based his view on the nature of dialogicality, where meaning, as Holquist and Emerson (1981) suggest, is ‘rented’ and involves two or more voices. This socio-cultural view of meaning (which rejects the atomistic and disengaged notion of the self together with the idea of a

literal\* meaning as a theoretical textual starting point and a mechanistic world view seeing individuals as independent of society) accepts the notion of multiple possible textual meanings, the recognition of authority (the viewpoint of the speaker), and an assumption that meaning is negotiated through interaction with others. It is this understanding which underlies my approach in this project.

Bakhtin understands text as both conveying and generating new meaning. This notion of the text as a thinking device, rather than a univocal transmission has clear implications for any interpretation of my research material if it is accepted that questions may be understood, interpreted and answered creatively. Indeed, answers may re-define the question, the inherited value system behind the question, or the nature and structure of the question. As Carol Gilligan's research discovered, quoted by Wertsch (1991), women may answer questions through a completely different set of understandings and world views from men, using, in Bakhtin's terms, a different social language.

(\*) *"Literal" is seen as an ideological construction, privileging a particular view of language. Humpty Dumpty's point of view!*

## **Language Units**

Bakhtin's understanding of language units, his notion of utterance, voice, social language (a way of speaking associated with specific groupings), ventriloquation (one voice speaking through another's voice) and multivoicedness, resonate profoundly with Stanislavski's analytical *Units of Action*, (Stanislavski, 1948), and the vital importance Stanislavski gave to the '*Given Circumstances*' (ibid.) of a play, when actors attempt to analyse a character and understand meaning. I have taken cognisance of Bakhtin's three fundamental properties of units of speech communication in analysing the written and spoken material

gathered for this research. These properties of 'real' units of speech communication have: Boundaries (that is the speaking subject), Finalisation (the end of an utterance), and Generic Form (they express something). In other words, they are entities in themselves with content and expression.

### **3.4.b. Neo-Vygotskian Socio-Cultural Theories of Learning**

Socio-cultural theories of learning, deriving from the work of Vygotsky (1987) known as Cognitive Apprenticeship (Wertsch, 1991; Lave and Wenger, 1991; Brown et al., 1989; Goody, 1989), explore the development of mind through cultural imperatives and assume that we seek meaning from experience and behave in relationship to our perceived meaning. This is also implicit in the Marxist notion of Praxis, the interdependence of theory and practice, from which both de-contextualised and craft forms of knowing are derived (Marx, 1975).

Socio-cultural theories of learning over the past thirty years have drawn on a wide number of influences, disciplines, theoretical perspectives and methodological approaches, explicating and elaborating on Vygotsky's work and investigating the nature of context in both intra-psychological and inter-psychological development.

The work of Scribner and Cole (1981) and Jacob (1992) has been powerful in influencing the way in which occupations are seen as socio-cultural activities in which the specific environment is viewed as being an integral component of the cognitive process of those involved (Scribner, 1985; Jacob, 1992). The work of Jean Lave and her colleagues saw context as being divided into the Arena (the physical characteristics) and Setting (how the context is defined by the participants), and investigated the dialectic between them, developing the work of Activity Theory (Lave et al., 1984). Her work with Etienne Wenger on Situated Learning (Lave and Wenger, 1991) looked at learning as a feature of practice, seen as legitimate peripheral

participation in communities of practice (ibid.), and described the interconnective process where participants become full members thereby changing their self identity as they re-negotiate their situation.

Carol Cain's study of Alcoholics Anonymous (Cain, 1991) used Wood, Bruner and Ross's theory of Scaffolding (Wood et al., 1976) (where experts provide experiences and challenges that facilitate a novice's potential development to transform, into usable knowledge) as a strategy of socialization, where alcoholics develop a narrative of recognition of their own drinking practices through hearing others stories, built on a particular set of values, allowing them to relate their own history to the related narration.

Questions regarding the transformation of self image through initiation rituals, questions of deviancy and the reconstruction of initiates who enter training at a point of 'diffusion', the idea of a place where socially unacceptable behaviour and values can be examined, an ethos where socially sanctioned behaviour is no longer the norm, where behaviour is examined and observed rather than judged, and personal histories, biography, gender and sexualities are used as material for critical examination have been applied in this research towards an understanding of the means by which the participants in the present research re-interpret themselves as actors rather than students and has been stimulated by Cain's research.

Collins, Brown and Newman's work on Cognitive Apprenticeship (Collins et al., 1989) and Situated Cognition (Brown et al., 1989) discusses the way in which knowledge has become abstracted from its concretised use during the last century, resulting in serious implications for the nature of the knowledge acquired, which is alienated from any social or functional circumstance (situated learning), and examines apprenticeship knowledge (based on observation, coaching and successive approximation) as a more helpful form of learning. Collins

examined traditional apprenticeship methods and their implications in the teaching of reading, writing and arithmetic in schools. He looked at the development of self-monitoring and self-correcting practices, integrating the skills and conceptual (formal) knowledge needed to advance expertise, viewing learning as a scaffolded and guided experience. Collins' work and analysis has been formative in my comprehension of the present case study as being a site of Cognitive Apprenticeship, offering a framework and the characteristics for an ideal learning environment and aiding my language of analysis for the present researched course description (Collins et al., 1989). However, the author's conclusions that personal computers might be able to "... *foster a renewal of apprentice-like learning in our schools...*" (ibid.; p.491) would seem to directly contradict Vygotsky's concept of mediational means and may lead to some unintended consequences.

Levine and Moreland's work investigating socially shared cognition within work groups (Levine and Moreland, 1993) looked at how group members transmit knowledge to each other. They defined the characteristics of a group's culture as being the thoughts (i.e. a common interpretive framework) and customs of a group, and examined how the culture is acquired by newcomers. They analysed the questions that group members need to find answers to, namely:

- What makes their group different
- The significance of the group
- The history, current state and possible future of the group
- The quality of the group
- The nature, climate and coping strategies of the group

The expectations, social norms and relationship to the world outside the group have been formative in my understanding of group dynamics, and have steered questions regarding my participants' views on 'typical' students, people who make 'good' teachers, other

group members and the behaviour of others within the group, together with notions regarding 'job performance' and explanations, time pressures and accountability. The notions of group routines, and ideologies, jargon, rituals and group symbols, and the ideas surrounding strong and weak cultures within groups have stimulated subsidiary questions, as has their work on how the cultural knowledge of a group is transmitted through 'old-timers', including tutors and mentors. This work has proved essential in forming my analysis of group tactics, change and dynamics.

Esther Goody's historical perspective and comparative analysis of the emergence of apprenticeship as an institution and the social-psychological processes of apprenticeship learning (Goody, 1989), compares the similarities between contemporary cognitive psychological approaches to learning and traditional apprenticeships in different cultures, relating different forms of apprenticeships to the progressive division of labour and increasing commoditisation of the products of labour. Her analysis of apprenticeship, which maps directly on to Vygotsky's zones of proximal development theory, in terms of learning through joint participation of learners and experts and internalisation of schemata (mental representations of actions), has clarified my ideas for analysing the course structure of the present research. Goody clearly relates changing apprenticeship practices to the changing economic structure of society and provides a clear definition of apprenticeship as "*...someone who doesn't know, learning from someone who does...*" (Goody, 1989; p.234), which emphasises the traditional and domestic nature of this learning through doing, the most ancient form of human knowledge transmission.

Complimentary to Goody's work, which relates a form of learning to the economic infrastructure of society, is Singleton's work which relates apprenticeship processes as a pattern of enculturation, studying Japanese potters and their craft, whose apprenticeship practices rely on social conceptions of obligation, learning and discipline (Singleton, 1989). He documents five stages of learning, with learner involvement growing in complexity, which may be seen as clearly related to processes of actor training and has aided my conception of the cognitive processes involved in practice. His study points towards the Japanese cultural notions of the importance of discipline, commitment and dedication as essential within their apprenticeship practice which interestingly views talent as being developed through persistence and not as an innate or inherited characteristic. Both Goody's and Singleton's work demonstrate the importance of viewing cognition, not only intra-psychically, but related to the wider dimension of the specific culture and craft within which it is embedded.



### **3.5. Historical Overview and the Relationship to the Present Study**

Vygotsky and Bakhtin's theories and the work of the Neo-Vygotskians in relationship to Stanislavski's system of actor training have been explored and developed in the West, particularly in the work of Drama in Education, Drama Therapy, Oral Literacy and Speech and Play Therapies. Vygotsky believed the Stanislavski 'system' was a method of practical psychology for the creative work of actors (Vygotsky, 1932), and viewed the theatre director's work as a reflection of his own dialectical thinking in psychology, illuminating and clarifying the philosophy of Marx, in seeing the concrete life of the living person, historically and culturally situated, forming the thought process and subsequent desires and actions of the person. This certainly corresponds to Stanislavski's understanding that our actions arise out of our given circumstances.

The basis of Vygotsky's Activity Theory (Jacob, 1992), linking a person's needs to their objectives, and objectives to thought, and thought to speech, are identical to Stanislavski's method of building a character through the specific socio-historical given circumstances and finding a character's desires and needs through actions, activities and objectives. Stanislavski's notions of sub-text and the inner monologue were subsequently used by Vygotsky in his concept and understanding of Appropriation (where language is seen as being the central means through which cognitive change occurs) and he also writes appreciatively of Stanislavski's crucial understanding of the nature of emotion [which I quote at some length because of its importance in the context of the present case study],

*"...Stanislavski says that feeling cannot be commanded. We have no direct power over feeling ...But if a feeling "cannot be evoked...voluntarily and directly, then it may be enticed by resorting to what is more subject to our power, to ideas".... this path is more tortuous and as Stanislavski correctly notes, more like coaxing than direct arousal of the required feeling. Only indirectly, creating a complex system of ideas, concepts, and images of which emotion is a part, can we arouse the required feelings and, in this way, give a unique psychological colouring to the entire system as a whole and to its external expression..." (Vygotsky, 1932)*

The philosophical and theoretical underpinning of the training of the inner technique of the actor in this researched case study is based on the same axiomatic underpinnings as Vygotsky's theory of mind.

Stanislavski's methods of actor training found resistance when introduced into England, primarily through the U.S.A., and his work may be seen as sometimes having been misapplied and vulgarised in the United States through being interpreted as a means of taking a character in a play 'down' to the actor's given circumstances and emotions, rather than reaching 'up' to the particular circumstances of the character within the circumstances of the script and the role. This places an emphasis on the *emotions* of the actor, rather than on a character's *wants* (actions), which can lead to self indulgence and a 'wallowing' in the actor's personal emotions. Perhaps this contributed to the distrust of Stanislavski in England, where an actor's tendency was to work from an objectified idea of displaying, but not genuinely 'feeling', the emotional life of a character.

I wonder, speculatively, if this cultural misunderstanding of the action-based and dialectical nature of Stanislavski's work was partly due to the more individualistic nature of the Western cultures into which it was being introduced in the 1930s and 50s, as opposed to the more collective and socially derived concept of the 'self' in Russia at the time? It was not until the 1960s and the beginning of the 'new left', and more socialistically inclined ideologies, particularly in England, that

the Stanislavski methods were more accepted within actor training, as evidenced by the opening of the two radical drama schools, East 15 Acting School and Drama Centre, London. This connects to the present study in terms of my research questions, phenomenological method and discussion of my findings relating to value systems and ideas of the self and the relationship of language as a mediational tool to the development of our perception of ourselves in the world.

The present study is strongly influenced by the neo-Vygotskian tradition as an inter-disciplinary research project, attempting to connect aspects of sociological, cultural, educational, psychological and philosophical theory and the acquisition of specific craft knowledge to self identity.

### **3.6. Summary**

In this chapter I have reviewed the literature which has informed my thinking and situated this study.

In reviewing the literature, the work of Vygotsky and Bakhtin, the Neo Vygotskians and the conceptual framework of Situated Cognition, provided me with scaffolding on which to build. My review has focused on work with a strong psychological basis and has confirmed that a phenomenological approach to my study would be most relevant, allowing a discussion of my findings which related value systems, ideas of the self and the relationship of mediational tools to the development of our perception of ourselves in the world.

As a result of this literature review my research questions will focus on participants' lived experience of the studied course, which I will discuss in *Chapter Four*, examining my research methodology and the ensuing challenges and issues involved in relation to the knowledge I wish to acquire. I then discuss my research design and methods, data

collection, analysis and presentation of my findings.

**Chapter Four:**  
**MY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, DESIGN AND**  
**METHODS**

## **4.1. Introduction**

In the preceding chapter I reviewed the literature which has contextualised this study. My review focused on work with a strong psychological basis and has confirmed that a phenomenological approach to my study would be most relevant allowing a discussion of my findings which related value systems, ideas of the self and the relationship of mediational tools to the development of our perception of ourselves in the world.

This chapter examines my research methodology and the ensuing challenges and issues involved in relation to the knowledge I wish to acquire. I then discuss my research design and methods, data collection, analysis and presentation of my findings.

### **4.1.a. My Research Questions**

*I began this project with a seeming paradox: Training to be an actor as a mature student is financially costly and personally demanding with little chance of even a subsistence level of paid employment in the years following training; yet every year increasing numbers of highly educated and often professionally qualified high achieving adults sacrifice secure employment, money, comfortable accommodation and relationships in order to train. Why do they do this?*

The following questions became articulated as I pursued this study.

- What factors influenced the students' decision to take this course?
- What was the students' experience of the course?
- What do students believe have been the factors that influenced their experiences
- How do they feel about their experiences?

Behind my questioning was also the drive to understand how the researched course might enable students to realise their personal and artistic potential and survive as an integrated person within the highly competitive professional industry for which they are being trained.

## **4.2. My Research Methodology**

### **4.2.a. Introduction**

Given the nature of my research questions, that I am seeking to understand the essentially human nature of the experience (the underlying existential meaning for the students, together with my involvement and personal investment in the researched course and my commitment to understanding how we learn to become more fully ourselves), a post-Husserlian Existential Phenomenology, based mainly on the work of Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961) was my choice, both as a philosophy and as a research method demanding rigorous contextualisation, analytical discipline and reflection on the life-world, as it attempts to explicate the lived structure of meaning and to understand the nature of experience (our senses, moods, emotions, smells, sounds, the flow of time, the experience of the self and others). Merleau-Ponty (2002) emphasised the embodied nature of human experience, the experience of our own bodies and its significance in our activities and actions. He envisioned consciousness as embodied in the world and our bodies infused with conscious cognition of the world. I have used the concepts of lived-body, lived-space, lived-self and lived-time both in my presentation of data and as a basis of my analysis and discussion.

#### **4.2.b. Intentionality**

*“Looking attentively involves theorising”.* Goethe’s (1963) aphorism draws our attention to the connections we inevitably make between things when we attend to the world. Husserl’s concept of Intentionality originally conceptualised by Brentano (1838 – 1913) relates to this aphorism. Intentionality, the fundamental principle of Phenomenology (Husserl, 1982) focuses on the inter-relationship between consciousness and the world, from which we derive meaning. Consciousness, he suggests, is always directed towards something, it is consciousness of something.

Intentionality refers to the basic interpretive nature of human relationships to the world. Assuming this philosophical position negates and supersedes the possibility of the empiricist tradition of the separation of subject and object, and argues that they are only meaningful in relationship to each other, that they co-constitute one another. We are our lived relationship and engagement with the world, through consciousness, which may be seen as intentionality-towards, and through which perception the world exists and from which knowledge is derived. As Sartre (1957) suggests, we are ‘condemned’ to meaning through consciousness/Intentionality, the giving of meaning in an act of signification.

The concept of Intentionality is further conceptualised by Husserl as having two aspects, the Noema and the Noesis, which can be seen as the ‘What’ and the ‘How’ of Intentionality. Noema refers to the direction of our attention, what we are attending to, and the Noesis refers to the way we attend to something. The Noema of Intentionality may be commonly shared. We may look, concentrate on, or contemplate the same thing, or object. However, the Noesis, the way we look at something is unique to each individual, dependant upon each person’s cognitive and affective biases: the meaning we give to



something is unique to each of us. These two aspects of Intentionality, Noema and Noesis, theoretically distinguishable, are in practice impossible to completely separate; together they shape our experience and give meaning to everything we contemplate, as the Goethe aphorism suggests. From a phenomenological perspective each individual researcher and participant will bring to the research material a unique reality and set of pre-suppositions which must limit the shared possibility of experience. It is by applying concepts derived from that of Intentionality which has enabled me to engage and interpret the participants' changing perceptions of the course, which I outline in my presentation of the data, together with my own researcher pre-suppositions which I have attempted to identify in my reflexive essay '*A Struggle for Comprehension*' (Appendix 1).

I was also cognisant in this study of Heron's (1981) philosophical underpinning, encompassing Merleau-Ponty's (2002) notion of Intentionality, in which he defines consciousness of meaning in action as a defining feature of the mental, thus demanding of researchers that we ask our participants if their constructs and intentions concur with our conclusions. A central question must ask whether the participants' intention in doing what they did (or saying what they said) is consonant with my interpretation in my conclusions. I have used member checking and verification of the Reduced Narrative Profiles of the students' interviews and triangulation of the data to aid this process.

#### **4.2.c. Bracketing and Reduction**

I found Husserl's conception of Epoche, the notion of abstaining from belief by bracketing the question of the external world impossible to fully conceptualise and could empathise far more with Heidegger's conception that we are always in-the-world, the idea of our being-in-the-world and that it is essential to investigate our contextual relations to the things in our world, therefore resisting Husserl's Cartesian emphasis on consciousness and subjectivity. Merleau-Ponty, drawing on Heidegger's conception, discusses bracketing as Reduction, an attitude of suspending the natural view of the world as being Other (an object), and viewing it as a phenomena (as 'perceived') as a being-for-consciousness – rather than as a Cartesian attempt to deny the natural world. Merleau-Ponty sees reduction as replacing our taken-for-granted acceptance of the world with what he describes in the introduction to 'The Phenomenology of Perception' (Merleau-Ponty, 2002) as an attitude of "...a sense of wonder in the face of the world..." in order to "....slacken the intentional threads which attaches us to the world, and thus to bring them to our notice...".

This is a view of the world with which I am familiar, as Merleau-Ponty discusses in his last published work in 1964, “The Primacy of Perception”, and as I discuss in my reflective commentary, it is a view very similar to the non-judgemental view necessary for the artist. In order to gain what Michael Chekhov (1991) calls The Higher Creative Consciousness, or Higher Ego, it is necessary for actors to forgo their personal judgementalism and empathise entirely with the character they are portraying in order to more fully understand the person. It is similar to the Russian Formalists in the 1920s who believed that the purpose of poetic language was to make the world ‘new’ again by de-familiarising language, making the familiar, unfamiliar. The Formalist critic, Victor Shklovsky, wrote in 1925, “...*Habitualism devours objects, clothes, furniture, relationships and the fear of war – but art exists to help us recover the sensations of life, it exists to make us feel things, to make the stone, stony...*” (www.vahidnab.com). The same objective, to enlarge their capacity to perceive, underlies much of the training of an actor, which is illustrated in *Scenes 1, 2, and 9* of my part presentation **‘From Thanatos to Eros’**, and has been used throughout, as Eidetic Reduction, in the construction of the presentation.

## **4.3. My Research Design and Procedures**

### **4.3.a. Introduction**

My main data collection was a year long iterative process, structured around interviewing, the collection of documentary evidence, observation, and the gradual, non-linear understanding and narrowing of my research focus.

It was during this period that I began to feel that I was actively

engaged in the research process, rather than preparing for it. I can liken this process to film-making which may be divided into three major sections:

- 1) Pre-Production, which concerns the research into the idea for the film, the practical formation, casting and crewing of the film;
- 2) Production, the gathering of the material; and
- 3) Post-Production, which is the actual 'making' process, the fashioning of the gathered material and editing it into a narrative.

The Production part of film-making is often slow, frustrating, exhilarating, satisfying and filmed out of sequence and with an awareness of the post-production process influencing decisions. The questions are always: Have I captured enough material? Have I captured the 'right' material from enough angles to tell the participants' story?

Data collection proceeded in much the same way as film production and I asked the same questions. Indeed, finding the 'right' questions to ask took some time and I continued to fine tune, edit and supplement my questions and refine my interviewing technique throughout the process. The following narrative of the structure, conduct and procedure is told through retrospection, and my Research Diary (Book 6) notes.

#### **4.3.b. Gatekeepers**

Access to the material used in this research, through multiple 'gate-keepers', has been eased through my own position as Programme Leader of the researched course. This 'back yard' research has inevitable ethical bias and power relationship issues attached to it, which I discuss below.

The principal gate-keepers have been the Deans of the Arts Educational Schools, London, and the Schools Principal, who have

facilitated and encouraged the project; the Administrator of the School of Acting, who has facilitated my document search; and the M.A. students themselves, who without exception have availed themselves, their time and their experience to discuss with me, to verify and substantiate various aspects of the research.

#### **4.3.c. Ethical Principles Related to this Study**

Central issues in any discussion of ethics with regard to human research revolve around four major and interrelated questions which Diener and Crandall (1978, cited by Bryman, 2004) state are:

- Whether there is harm to participants
- Whether there is lack of informed consent
- Whether there is an invasion of privacy
- Whether deception is involved

The British Educational Research Association (Bera) Revised Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research (2004) contain underlying principles of respect for:

- The Person
- Knowledge
- Democratic Values
- The Quality of Educational Research
- Academic Freedom

Educational enquiry is part of the social sciences, which as Cassell and Wax (1980) point out were originally called the 'moral' sciences, which by definition includes concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, and cannot therefore be divorced from the researchers' ontological assumptions which I have attempted to make clear throughout this research project.

Murphy and Dingwell (2001) highlight two problems of adherence to codes of ethics, firstly that they may constrain research unnecessarily as they are not sensitive to particular methods and secondly that the observance of codes may blunt a researcher's sensitivities to delicate and subtle issues and thereby not afford genuine protection to research participants. A reflexive question of paramount importance, as Heron (1981) suggests, must be a question of how one explains one's own behaviour. A basic assumption underlying this research project is the notion that our humanity exists not in our autonomous individuality as things-in-ourselves, but in the nature of our relationships. Martin Buber (1958) refers to this notion as the cradle of life. Social relationships, he suggests, are primary and irreducible, for it is only in our relationships with others that we can gain knowledge of our own individuality or understand ourselves as individuals. This entails an ethical standpoint not only of respect but of mutuality in the ethical conduct of research which I have attempted to follow through self questioning and reflection on my personal intentionality throughout the research process. Such a view makes problematic the question of validity.

#### **4.3.d. The Problems of Validity**

The post-Husserlian phenomenological research perspective, seen as ontology, argues against any universal notion of permanent truth and suggests that all valid knowledge is ideological, in so far as it takes place in relationship between interested parties (Lincoln, 2005), thus the criteria of validity for this research become problematical as the conventional scientific formulations of external and internal reliability, validity and generalizability are inappropriate. It is now over forty years since Kuhn's "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions" (1970) elucidated the ideological nature of all knowledge claims and observed that there are no paradigm-free ways of seeing the world.

Accepting that knowing cannot be separated from the knower, it is unsurprising that over the last few decades new-paradigm theorists have suggested various, sometimes conflicting possibilities for what constitutes valid and rigorous research, as validity is dependant upon belief systems. Guba and Lincoln (2005) [citing Bernstein, 1983; Polkinghorne, 1989; Schwandt, 1996] suggest arguments regarding truth claims may be moving towards the hermeneutical tradition of a shared test of validity through the discussion of the participants in the discourse. Moral considerations (Schwandt, 1989), philosophical pragmatism (Rorty, 1979) and the goals of participatory and cooperative inquiry, goals which emphasise human flourishing, are variously advocated as elements in formulating notions of truth.

#### **4.3.e. Alternative Possibilities for Validation**

The problem of method validation within this research, as it relies on data collection methods which have long been established as suitable for conducting research in natural surroundings (including prolonged engagement in the field, extensive use of documentary evidence, observation and extended interviews), is less problematical than the presentation and interpretation of the empirical material collected. My research concerns are with the experienced feelings and emotions of the participants and how they relate to their understanding of themselves and the meaning they give to their craft and their world.

Guba and Lincoln (2005) outline and discuss a number of non-foundational criteria for constructivist research which I have found relevant. These are trustworthiness, consisting of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, together with authenticity, criteria of fairness, defined in terms of balance and inclusion to ensure that all voices in the project are represented; ontological and educative authenticity, which is defined in terms similar to Schwandt's critical intelligence, seen as the capacity to engage in

moral critique; and catalytic and tactical authenticities which bear relationship to action research and prompts practical possibilities for social improvement based on cooperative values.

Bochner (2002), in his paper 'Criteria against Ourselves', controversially suggests that the demand for criteria reflects the desire to contain freedom, limit possibilities and resist change. He argues that we are preoccupied with rigor at the expense of imagination and goes on to discuss alternative ways of examining what he names poetic social science, and what Ivan Brady (1991, cited by Bochner, 2002; p.262) calls "*...art-ful science...*", "*...where the beauty and tragedy of the world are textually empowered by the carefully chosen constructions and subjective understandings of the author...*". He is referring mainly, but not exclusively, to self-narratives (and I have been influenced by his alternative criteria when considering the presentation of my empirical material), and it contains the following elements; concrete detail including emotional veracity; structurally complex narratives reflecting the non-linear process of memory; authorial credibility, vulnerability and honesty; ethical self-consciousness and moral conviction; and finally a narrative that reveals life as it is lived (Bochner, 2002).

Denzin and Lincoln (2002a) propose that in the 'seventh moment' of qualitative research, central to which Richardson (1994) describes as "*...doubt that any discourse has a privileged place, any method or theory a universal and general claim to authoritative knowledge...*", the criteria for evaluating such work must be moral and ethical. Christians (2005) suggests a research model rooted in concepts of care, shared governance, neighbourliness, love and kindness.

Kvale's (2002) view of validity rests upon what he describes as an affirmative post-modernism, similar to Donna Haraway's (1988) view that rejects universal truths but accepts the idea of specific, localised and personal, forms of truth focusing on daily life and local narrative.



Kvale points out that the historical tension between facts and meanings, observation and interpretation, has moved to the tension between meaning and acts, between interpretation and action. This change has foregrounded aesthetics and ethics, suggesting that when knowledge is viewed as a social construction, the beauty and social value of the knowledge becomes pre-eminent (Kvale, 2002). He echoes Polkinghorne's (1988) argument that in a post modern discourse, scientific knowledge can neither be sharply separated from, nor privileged over, artistic convictions and ethical reasoning. Kvale outlines conceptions of validity in terms of craftsmanship, communication and action.

Kvale's (2002) discussion on validity makes it clear that he is not attempting to replace preciseness of observations, but to open up questions of knowledge about the social world; however he does suggest that too strong a focus on validation, control and legitimation may hamper creativity and the production of new insights. The way forward, he proposes, might be that the craftsmanship of a piece of research is such that its knowledge claim has its own validity, in the same way as a piece of art, through its intrinsic beauty, is convincing and self-evidently true and good (Kvale, 2002).

Kvale argues that in viewing knowledge as a social and linguistic construction, the focus must rest on negotiating inter-personal meaning in the lived world (Kvale, 2002). The research methods used in this research make me responsible not only to outside bodies, but to participants (Denzin, 2002), through my use of the concepts of Intentionality, Reduction, intersubjectivity and reflexive practice.

#### **4.3.f. Power and Exploitation**

The many problems of exploitation and power which can arise within many aspects of the research process, as Cassell and Wax (1980) point

out, occur on a day to day to day basis in the many different teaching capacities one is faced with, presenting moral difficulties in a variety of complex situations.

The nature of the training which underpins the aims and objectives of the researched course demands questioning androcentric, hierarchical and objective relationships between student and teacher. It attempts to explore a more feminist, participatory relationship, involving a duty of caring, mutuality, compassion and mutual empowerment as explored by Murphy & Dingwell (2001), Ceglowski (2002), Fine and Weis (2002), Kvale (2002), Lincoln (2002), and Christians (2005).

This Feminist Communitarian model (Denzin, 1997) gives an ethos and point of departure to the course, to the teaching and learning methods on the course and they have influenced my research relationships and methods. These teaching and learning methods, which Kolb et al. (1994) identify as an Experiential Learning Model, involves an approach which Payne (1996) describes as:

- Learner centred
- Learning by doing
- Links theory to practice
- Focuses on live problems
- Encourages reflection on experience to draw out principles and generalisations
- Addresses the whole person
- Recognises learning as a social process

This aims to develop:

- More independence from external sources of decision, information, problem definition and motivation
- Emotional strength to work with powerful feelings, conflicts and unfamiliar values and attitudes
- Ability to make choices and commitments to action under stress or

uncertainty

- Ability to use own or others feelings, attitudes and values as information in defining and solving human problems.

I did not envisage having such overt ethical dilemmas regarding deception as was faced by Humphreys (1970) in 'Tearoom Trade', where his investigation of gay encounters in public toilets involved dangerous knowledge and complete physical disguise, or even Burgess (1984) at the Bishop McGregor School which involved partly covert and closed research, as I attempted to present myself openly and multi-dimensionally to participants. However this also involved a number of subtle and invidious ethical challenges relating to which particular open and multi-dimensional 'me' I presented, and was I presenting different 'me's' to different participants at different times depending on the particular nature and degree of the 'openness' of my relationship with any particular participant?

The problem of the imbalance of power relationships is not solved by adopting a more intimate feminist stance as suggested by feminist writers, for as Murphy and Dingwall (2001) point out, more concerned relationships between researchers and their participants may disguise more perilous forms of manipulative and exploitative interactions.

Marjorie Wolf, quoted by Atkinson et al (2001) questions the nature of power differentials between researchers and researched being necessarily exploitative, suggesting that exploitation only occurs when research is used to achieve the researcher's objectives at real cost to those they are studying. But who is to judge what constitutes 'real cost'? She further suggests that research should be judged in terms of its effects, particularly on the collective studied, rather than in relationship to issues of power and control. However this surely raises problems of judgement and therefore power? I would accept the Critical Theory, as articulated by Kincheloe and McLaren (2000), that takes as a basic assumption that all personal interactions are activated

through power relations that are culturally and historically constituted and that facts can never be isolated from values or divorced from ideology.

The relationship between myself and students is, however open and explicit, an asymmetrical one with unequal power distribution and gender differentials which must be taken into account and subjected to careful reflexive consideration, and as Drake, Elliot & Castle (1993) suggest, the gendered thinking of a researcher may bring a myriad of implicit theories to the research site and seriously effect the discourse.

However, power is certainly not all one-sided. My position constantly requires the explicit or implicit consent of students for me to remain in receipt of their confidences and revelations. As an acting teacher students would expect me to protect their privacy and confidences and without such assurances and trust creative acting work would not be possible.

For this case study all interview material, in the form of Reduced Narrative Profiles (*Appendix 8*), were given to participants to read and respond to, and any emendations required by the participants (in relationship to third parties or clarity of meaning) were accepted or negotiated with them, when the script was amended and re-sent for member checking.

#### **4.3.g. Confidentiality**

A central tenet of the course participants are undertaking is the opportunity for them to experiment and take risks in a 'safe space'. The concept of a 'safe space' allows students to take creative risks without fear of judgement or censure. This tenet is non-negotiable and must remain so if students are to explore beyond their own boundaries and to discover new areas of their creative possibilities. Confidentiality

is of vital importance in a teaching capacity, except in cases of illegality and where issues of harm are at stake. For this study, informed consent was given by participants in the form of Participation Release Agreement Forms (*Appendix 6*).

Given the nature of the research project it would not be difficult to identify the institution or the course, despite pseudonyms being used, as there are a limited number of such institutions. I could not change the gender of the participants without seriously undermining the validity of the data, although pseudonyms, which were chosen by me, are used throughout the study.

I have not used any data in this research which I believe would compromise a participant personally or professionally if they were identified, and I do not believe that this decision has affected the narrative or conclusions of the study. Such data might include criminal, illegal or personally compromising activities by any participants.

#### **4.3.h. The Research Relationship with Participants**

The limits of my relationship with participants are contextual and pragmatic, governed by common sense, rationality, intuition and mutual psychological and physical safety.

I am occasionally privileged with confidential knowledge. I refer to information regarding a participant which is privileged because of my work with them. This knowledge could be shameful or humiliating in situations which were not protected by the 'safe space' (a confidential and non-judgemental space) provided by the training situation. Such knowledge, which is often only revealed to participants themselves during the training process, and as a result of the nature of acting training (perhaps relating to their sexuality, gender, formative childhood or adolescent experiences or family trauma) are deemed confidential to the situation within which they arise. These are

dilemmas which are common to many teachers, nurses, doctors and other practitioners working within 'caring' capacities. This knowledge brings with it ethical responsibilities in the knowledge that my first consideration is to the student's welfare rather than as research material.

By researching participants I had taught, I am attempting to sit on two horses at once and it has involved a delicate negotiation and alterations to my perspective. As a researcher I had to attempt to 'see anew', a process which I describe in my reflexive journey, '*The Struggle for Comprehension*' (Appendix 1).

It was essential during the period of my data collection that my role as a researcher was made clear, explicit and known to all, and I could not pre-judge the effect this might have had on the behaviour of participants, but it has informed my research process which I describe in my recruitment and selection of participants

My position accepts voluntary informed consent as essential and central to the project, and I was able to gain this from participants. The problem of authenticity in field relations is investigated by Cooper (1993) in relationship to participants' perceptions of teaching and learning in classrooms and highlights the crucial importance of the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the researched. His conclusion underlay the importance of my own reflexive approach in this research and a continual sensitivity to my own intentionalities.

## **4.4. The Data Collection Process**

### **4.4.a. The Interview as a Joint Construction of Co-Created Selves**

*‘Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu’* (humans are humans because of other humans) – Bantu saying.

Seeing the self as being created and defined by interaction with others and the world, as Merleau-Ponty describes poetically as being the *‘... flesh of the world...’*, is to see interviews as joint constructions of the self. Both the interviewer and the interviewee are creating and defining themselves and their reality in a specific place in a specific moment of time.

Knowledge gained from interviews may be seen as a building which is the result of two people working together where both have a vision of what the building may look like but cannot directly reveal their vision to the other. I was keen to build the vision of the participant, but I was aware that I could only see the participants’ vision through my own interpretation. Each builds up through the construction process, adapting and changing as the other adapts and builds. The resulting construction, dependent on the quality of the interview, may be an architectural disaster unable to stand the challenges of use, or it may be an aesthetic and functioning structure. Whatever its final outcome, it is a unique product of a relationship between two situated and contextualised people. Its authenticity resides in its honesty and integrity to its context.

The interviews in this study follow a hermeneutical tradition which argues for a dialogic understanding of the conception of truth. Kvale (1996) identifies five features of a qualitative research interview which I will now use in order to provide a structure for discussing further

issues in relationship to my data presentation.

Firstly that it is conversationally constructed. Conversation is seen here as constituting a basic mode of knowing. Rorty (1979) emphasises this construct when he claims that we may view conversation as the final arbiter of knowledge and Mishler (1986) defines interviews as a conversation where meanings are jointly constructed.

Secondly, knowledge is narratively structured. We tell stories about ourselves. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that we are storytelling organisms who lead storied lives. In “Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences” (Polkinghorne, 1988), Donald Polkinghorne’s core argument is that, *“...Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events into episodic units. It provides a framework for understanding the past events of one’s life and for planning future actions. It is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful...”*. Bruner (1996) writes of narrative understanding as one of the two basic intelligences or modes of cognitive functioning (the other being the logico-scientific mode), and he describes the subject matter of narratives as the changing directions and goals of human action. Vygotsky (1987) claims that every word we utter is a microcosm of our consciousness. Polkinghorne (1988) argues for the study of narrative meaning in order to clarify the way meaning is produced and its implications for human life.

It is important to note Polkinghorne’s (1988) five major problem areas which he identifies as being inherent in the investigation of meaning, namely that:

- It is a dynamic, transforming activity, constantly being reconstituted.
- We have direct access only to our own realm of meaning through self-reflection, but then only to the outcome of the meaning-making



process, not the process itself. Meaning is expressed through actions and language and our understanding is limited, even when reflected upon, by other cognitive operations such as repression.

- Linguistic data is context-sensitive.
- Analysis of data is through hermeneutic reasoning which is imprecise, tentative and inconclusive.
- The realm of meaning is integrated into various presentations and levels of abstractions such as remembrance, perception and imagination; complex patterns that interact, link and fold back on each other through condensation and displacement, making study of it difficult to investigate using methods of the natural sciences or quantitative techniques.

Polkinghorne concludes that in order to study the complex of realities that constitute meaning, the qualitative nuances of its expression are best captured in ordinary language; through self reflection, interviews and artefacts, using linguistic and hermeneutic techniques, as practiced by historians and literary criticism.

Kvale's third feature of qualitative interviews is that they produce linguistic knowledge, which is socially owned (Polkinghorne, 1988). Structures of language, as noted above in reference to the linguistic turn in philosophy, speak through people.

Kvale states, fourthly, that knowledge from interviews must be viewed in context. Knowledge is not automatically transferable to, or measurable with, other knowledges in other contexts, such as written or drawn documentary, or observational evidence. This brings into question the notion of triangulation and the problems of transcription. Atkinson and Coffey (2002) argue that the notion of triangulation is built on the notion of social reality being transferable from one context to another, but we cannot assume this. Acknowledgement must be made, as Gubrium and Holstein (2002a) propose, that methods which are used to describe the world are part of the reality which they

describe.

The epistemological problems of transcription are directly related to context, and as Mishler (1986) points out, different transcriptions become constructions of a different world and contain different implications. The differences between oral and written languages are many; they are de-contextualised translations, as Kvale (1996) suggests, with all the attendant problems of changing one set of rules into another set of rules. Consequently, the nature of the transcription becomes paramount.

For the phenomenological analysis which I have used in this study, the inclusion of verbal signals of emotion, pauses, tone and volume are relevant and need to be included, whereas the level of verbatim description necessary for linguistic analyses could be less [in fact I was able to both listen to a recording of the interview on my laptop and read a transcript at the same time while coding, losing only the body and facial language of myself and my participants]. Mishler (1986) emphasises the importance of a carefully prepared transcript which reflects the theoretical model of relations between meaning and speech, aspects of speech that directly bear on the aims of the study and the limitations of the basic data and resources which are available for analysis. He further defines features of a taped interview which are not transcribed (reinforcing the notion of an interview being only a partial representation of a representation of a linguistic reality), namely, rapid changes in pitch, stress, volume and rate and non-linguistic features of the speech situation, gestures, facial expression and body movements.

Kvale's final feature of qualitative interviews relates to the inter-relational nature of knowledge. Interviews take place 'between' people; they are a relationship and the knowledge created is inter-relational.

#### 4.4.b. Interviews: Selection of Participants

	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	
MALES	11	12	9	15	47
FEMALES	15	17	20	15	67
	26	29	29	30	112 (*)

*Fig.4.4.b(i) - Student cohort numbers during primary research period  
2003-2007*

*(\*) This figure relates to total number of students who completed their graduation from the course. During the period 2003-2007, there were two withdrawals from the course, both on health grounds. There were no student failures.*

Participants were chosen on the basis of their gender, their age, their previous life experience, their ethnicity and their temporal relationship with the course. I wanted to achieve as wide a selection as possible and used my tacit knowledge and intuition for this, followed by an administrative check through their student files to ensure that I had chosen a balanced group of students, representative of the above criteria.

A series of 14 interviews were conducted between April and November 2006:

- Six interviews were conducted with students during the course of their third term of training during the 2005-06 cohort
- Three interviews were conducted with students towards the end of their first term of training during the 2006-07 cohort

[No interviews were conducted with students during the second term of their training. I felt that the students interviewed at the beginning of their third term covered the ground of the second term adequately, and that I had sufficient material for my project; this proved to be the case on the basis of participant collaboration and validation]

- Two interviews were conducted with students who were one year out of the course
- One interview was conducted with a student three years out of the course
- One interview was conducted with a student four years out of the course
- One interview was conducted with a student ten years out of the course.

[The five participants who I interviewed after they had completed the course were convenience samples; the main concern was to ensure that a wide a period of time was covered]

*Fig.4.4.b(ii) - Temporal structure of Interviews*

Interview	Relationship to Course	Gender	Age	Nationality/ Ethnicity	Previous life experience
1	3 <sup>rd</sup> Term	F	Late 20s	Nigerian / Black	Engineer
2	3 <sup>rd</sup> Term	F	Early 20s	Tamil / Asian	Banker
3	3 <sup>rd</sup> Term	F	Early 30s	Australian / White	Vet. Surgeon
4	3 <sup>rd</sup> Term	M	Mid 20s	British / White	Law Degree
5	3 <sup>rd</sup> Term	F	Early 20s	British / White	Eng. Degree
6	3 <sup>rd</sup> Term	M	Early 20s	British / Black	Hist.

					Degree
7	1 year out	F	Mid 30s	British / White	Doctor/Psych
8	1 year out	F	Mid 20s	Irish / White	Teacher
9	3 years out	F	Late 20s	N.Zealand / White	Eng. Degree
10	10 years out	F	Early 30s	Ital/Eng / White	Dancer
11	4 years out	M	Early 30s	British / White	Res. Chemist
12	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	M	Late 20s	Australian / White	Drama Deg.
13	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	F	Mid 20s	Indian / Asian	Film Prod.
14	1 <sup>st</sup> Term	F	Early 20s	British / White	Drama Deg.

*Fig.4.4.b(iii) - Interview Sampling Table*

I chose participants from two separate cohorts to discuss their experience on the course, to ensure greater manifolds of identity through temporal space. Gender balance correlated with the gender balance within the cohorts and I also considered age and ethnicity in order to engage with as wide variety of experience as possible. This narrowed my choice considerably and from this group I chose students that I felt would be happy to talk to me without being intimidated too much by my position of power. They were not students I felt I necessarily had a particularly 'good' relationship with, but those I believed strong enough to voice their felt opinions. They were also educated adults paying a considerable amount of money for their training. No one who I approached had any hesitation in agreeing to be interviewed.

There have been no students who have left the course or expressed major dissatisfaction with the course over a considerable number of years, apart from one student who left through illness, who I did not attempt to contact. I did not, therefore, at this stage interview anybody who considered the course had failed them. One student I

interviewed I found personally a 'difficult' person to empathise with, and I suspect the feeling was mutual; however, I was able to bracket my personal antipathies, as indeed was the participant, and indeed, after the interview I was able to empathise with many of her understandings.

The recruitment of participants who had left the course was more problematic and far less representative. These were far more convenience samples. Both students who had left the course the previous year were women; one I contacted because I believed her maturity and previous experience would make her an excellent participant in terms of her ability to articulate her process, and the other because she had returned to the building to contact her singing tutor for private tuition for an audition.

The participant three years out of the course was interviewed as she had returned to the UK from the antipodes in order to perform at an international festival and had contacted me. The student four years out of the course had returned to observe classes while between professional engagements. The student from ten years previously had specialised as a movement tutor and was teaching a course module.

Clearly in retrospect, I should have also interviewed ex-students who had left the industry and may have had a very different narrative, which would have enriched the data but practical exigencies prevented this. The interview data was, however, triangulated with documentary and observational data, suggesting to me that I had gathered enough data on aspects of the course to enable an identity to be established.

#### **4.4.c. Preliminary Procedures**

The task of formulating interview questions for participants was a process which required immersion, reflection and continual

reformulation of the questions, editing, and refining.

I constructed two Interview Guides (*Appendix 4*), one for current students and one for former students. I intended the interviews to be open-ended, semi-structured guided conversations, lasting about an hour.

I purchased a good quality Digital Voice Recorder (Sony ICD-MX20) which was small, unobtrusive and reliable, as well as a Digital Voice Editor Programme for my laptop. This was a combination which has proved immensely helpful, allowing me to record excellent quality interviews on a memory stick which I sent off to the transcriber, while I could immerse myself in listening to the interview repeatedly on my laptop.

I constructed an Interview Procedure list (*Appendix 3*) which I checked off for each interview.

I located a reliable and experienced transcriber and sent her instructions regarding transcription and confidentiality. (These instructions were followed with consideration and diligence by the transcriber throughout the interview process)

I constructed a Participation and Release form. I also wrote a Participation 'thank you' letter, and a 'Member Check' letter. (All Interview formality letters etc. will be found in *Appendices 2 – 9 inc.*)

#### **4.4.d. Issues Encountered whilst Conducting the Interviews**

A month before I began the series of fourteen interviews for this project I wrote the following, *"...I feel totally inadequate to the task. Two years ago I was eager to begin – now I feel as though I don't know anything about anything. Somewhere in the back of my mind I feel that...*

*perhaps... this is a healthy state to start the practical stage of research..." (Diary Entry 3/3/06).*

My concern, I think, in retrospect, was whether I was asking the 'right' questions in the 'right' way - would they elicit a revealing response from my participants? Could I frame the interview correctly? Could I relax enough to listen to their answers and follow up succinctly? Were my questions probing but sensitive? Were they specific enough? Could I structure the interview to allow the participants to feel free and open? Could I allow the space for silence and be astute enough in my own thinking to clarify and make connections during the interview? Would I be sensitive enough to know when to veer away from the interview guide and when to veer back? Would I know when to stop? Concerns that could only be answered in the practical course of the interviews, which brought up their own problems...

My first interview brought me face to face with the reality of reflexivity: *"...As 'A' talked, this afternoon...I was aware of myself thinking, on at least two occasions, "This isn't right" or perhaps, "She's not saying the right things" – Interesting – what did I think she 'should' be saying... where did the 'right' and 'should' come from? What prejudices and values underlie those censorious words?..." (Diary Entry 24/4/06).*

My second interview was a joy:

*"...B\*\*\* spoke for an hour and a half – almost without interruption – articulate, thoughtful, prepared and confident – As I turned off the recorder and we left the room she commented, "Well, I couldn't have been more honest" – and I believe her – a fantastic interview – rich, detailed and revealing..." (Diary Entry 28/4/06).*

However, the next day:

*"I have had a big problem with downloading B\*\*\*'s interview onto the Digital Voice Editor software...resulting in a damaged file (introduction*



*only, thank goodness)...I don't know this software sufficiently to manipulate it and it could lead to disaster...I must sort this out soon... and find a proper rhythm for interviewing-downloading-filing-transcription-retrieving-analysing..." (Diary Entry 29/3/06).*

I attempted to write down from memory what had been lost and believed that I had done so accurately, until the 'lost' excerpt was recovered:

*"...B\*\*\*'s comments were far more extended and specific than I remembered – my notes were very poor, 'generally' correct – but lacking in depth and specificity..." (Diary Entry 30/4/06).*

By the end of the third interview I was beginning to review my questions...

*"...I must examine what is **not** said as carefully as what **is** said in these interviews. I have added some extra questions re: health, funding and the subject balance which I feel are very important..." (Diary Entry 8/5/06).*

I began picking up themes...

*"...I think I am beginning to intuit categories and can feel where I need to go..." (ibid.)*

...And questioned them:

*"...I wonder if my terms of reference are correct –all three interviewees have talked about 'some students who fail to put in everything they have – who mess about or aren't completely dedicated' (interpretation not quotation) - Is this a stable category or is it every students' perception – would there be a consensus about who these 'un-carers' are – or are 'they' the 'other'??..." (ibid.)*

Sometimes I just lost the plot:

*"...When the tape was turned off D\*\*\* talked about an aspect of his*

*experience that I meant to write up immediately – I thought I would remember it – I haven't – Lesson learned!!!..."* (Diary Entry 14/5/06).

By the end of May I had about eight and a half hours of interview material and certain themes were recurring:

*"...these people are so intelligent, sensitive and lovely to talk to!... Open and vulnerable – and I hope, strong enough to survive the industry – they have sacrificed a lot of money to train – that is for certain – their idealism shines from them!... I can hear certain themes again and again (idealism, confidence, sense of identity, selflessness) ...I look forward now to interviewing ex-students, to find out how it is after the experience and how they see it in retrospect – also to interviewing students in their first term when it appears the training is all very confusing..."* (Diary Entry 26/5/06).

I interviewed two former students (one year out of the course) during June, as I began the uniting and preliminary coding of my first interviews. What was said when the tape recorder was not running gave me further insights:

*"...Over a cup of coffee, after the interview (which took place in her flat), D\*\*\* said that one thing she hadn't mentioned on tape was that she felt that she was a better psychologist (therapist) after the course – I asked her in what way and she said more engaged, more giving of herself, less held back, more open, less afraid to give. This correlates directly with K\*\*\*, an ex-student from last year who said, (.....) that she was a much better teacher than she had been previously, 'the kids say I'm much softer, more caring'. I think she said she felt more loving towards the children and judged them less..."* (Diary Entry 8/6/06).

I was pleased with the results of the interviews. I felt that participants were extraordinarily forthcoming; more than happy to talk about their experiences, exceptionally open (mostly), or clear and direct when they wished not to talk about any aspect (very rare). I conducted the

interviews mainly in the Catholic Centre, in a room where participants said they felt relaxed and able to talk freely and comfortably, although other locations were available.

Over the course of the interviews I adapted my Interview Guide questions as they suggested themselves to me, or as participants suggested better questions than I had asked.

I didn't always cover all the questions on the guide, for a variety of reasons, perhaps they had been answered in a different form, or they seemed irrelevant given a previous answer, or other questions seemed more important. My main concern was with the participant and their experience; when that experience was made manifest in a way that differed from the guide, I followed the participant, not the guide.

The interviews lasted from about forty minutes to an hour and a half. The average was just over an hour long. To maintain a consistent approach, none of the participants were interviewed more than once, and they were each given a condensed transcript (reduced narrative profile) of their interview to read, make comments and alter, prior to analysis.

#### **4.5. The Context of the Observation Used in this Study**

In the following section I outline the practical observational techniques I pursued in this study, and address any issues and considerations I encountered while observing which I have not previously referred to in this chapter.

I observed four complete cohorts of students during the period of observation. The whole population of relevant participants each year numbered no more than 30 people and I could study them all

adequately over the year, being in contact with them most days during the first two terms as a teacher and course leader, and for half of the third term as a director and course leader. However, as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) suggest, different settings induce different contextual behaviours, and although I was acting as a 'fly on the wall', I was a rather obvious fly – my presence would have been noticed and behaviour, no doubt, altered accordingly.

Observation of my participants has been limited to their conduct within the community of practice as actors in training. I observed them while working, resting and playing within the social context of their training process. They were observed mainly within the setting of the Catholic Centre (the studios, kitchens, toilets, bar, foyer, corridors and rehearsal spaces), and also within the main building and the theatres and film locations used in the course of their work. No attempt was made to observe them outside their 'working' hours, making the ethnographic observation process limited and contextualised.

In accordance with my research methodology and focus and ethical stance, all my observation was conducted overtly and depending on the situation, using the Gans (1968) classification outlined by Bryman (2004). I was acting either as a total participant (completely involved in a situation), a researcher-participant (only semi-involved), or as a total researcher (purely observing a situation). At all times participants in this research were aware of my presence. Although they may not have always been consciously aware of my specific researcher 'role' at any particular time, participants were informed of my research interest, and the ongoing project and deception was never consciously practiced or intended.

Following Hammersley and Atkinson's (1995) guidelines to ensure the observational material gathered was as systematic and explicit as possible, case samples were selected along the three dimensions of

time, people and context as described below:

In one sense, I was observing 'in my own backyard', being in the position of an anthropological fieldworker or practitioner-researcher where I was on duty all day every day. However as Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) point out, I was aware that this does not necessarily correlate with good quality material.

The temporal division of the training process was very clear. I selected the following identifiable salient periods and junctures in order to build up an adequate and systematic temporal representation of participants' experiences:

*1. Seasonal and Annual cycles and “rites of passage”*

Auditioning and recruitment of applicants

Induction of students

“Showings” of work

Auditioning for “summer season” of productions

Productions attended

Graduation

Returning to “report progress” or help with auditioning new applicants

*2. Term structures*

Term One (“Beyond the Persona”)

Term Two (The Process of Creation)

Term Three (Performance)

*3. Weekly/daily structures*

I believe full and representative coverage has been given to the pattern of the participants’ routine and extraordinary life within the direct confines of their public life.

Participants were never observed outside their engagement with the course of study.

*Fig.4.5(i) – Temporal division of training*

I observed student cohorts primarily within my own daily interaction with them, as an observer in other tutors’ and directors’ sessions and rehearsals, and within student break and down times. A diary was used to record particular events, unusual observations or reflections, with an awareness of Glaser and Straus’s (1967) categories of:

- Observational notes (details)
- Methodological notes ( messages to myself, a process diary)
- Theoretical notes (connections, hunches and interpretations)
- Personal notes (feelings, reflections, doubts and concerns)

My research journals, written from observations, reading and reflection, have become a narrative of my researcher-self, a journey of my changing perceptions as I explored the research territory, leading me into more generalised philosophical reflections removed from the specific domain of my research, at other times crystallizing into a more

specific set of relationships between events or phenomena. (Examples are included in *Appendix 10*)

As preliminary material for the observational research I kept a detailed reflective journal and commentary, covering the period January 2003 to April 2004. (Examples of the journal are included in *Appendix 11*)

#### **4.6. The Documentary Evidence Used in this Study**

In this study I have consulted both formal and solicited documentary evidence in order to triangulate evidence and to compliment, corroborate, strengthen or refute observational and interview material (e.g. Students' Reflective Appraisals, students' models of themselves). The following is a record of the documents consulted and the analysis to which they were subject.

##### **4.6.a. Formal Documentation**

The following formal documentation was consulted for factual information concerning dates, times, institutional history and regulations, course and timetable structures, information given to the students concerning the course and assessment and feedback mechanisms, and formal feedback from student representatives regarding the course content and delivery:

- M.A. Course application forms (During Audition Process: 2004-2007)
- NCDT (National Conference of Drama Schools) statistical data (2005-06)
- Results of CDS (Conference of Drama Schools)/UCAS Statistical Research Project 2005 Data
- M.A. Course Document (2004)
- M.A. Student Handbook (For years 2004-05, 2005-06)
- City University Validated Institution, Course Board notes of meetings with representatives of the M.A. student body (2005-2007)

- Master Timetables for the M.A. Course (2004-2007)
- Term Timetables for the M.A. Course (2004-2007)

#### **4.6.b. Solicited Documentation**

The following solicited documentation, both written and drawn, was created by the students as part of their M.A. course (not for my research purposes), as part of their investigation into themselves and their relationship to their craft:

- Students' Reflective Appraisals (see analytic procedure below)
- Students' Reflective Re-Appraisals/Production Diaries (see analytic procedure below)
- Students' Subject Personal Assessment forms (random samples 2004-2007)
- Students' End of Course Anonymous Feedback Forms (random samples 2004-2007)
- Students' Alexander Technique 'Drawing of Myself with the left hand' (random samples, drawn documents 2004-2007)
- Students' three-dimensional 'Model of Myself' (random samples, photographic evidence 2004-2007)
- Students' 'Statements of Intent' (Full Cohorts, 2005-2007) (*Appendix 14*)

This documentation was referenced during my iterative analytical process for both verification and contradiction of emerging themes (see 4.8.g.).



## Examples of Solicited Documentation: Photographs of 3D Models

Examples of Solicited Documentation: 'Myself drawn wth my left hand'

Examples of Solicited Documentation: 'Myself drawn wth my left hand'

#### 4.6.c. Students' Reflective Appraisals

During the winter and spring breaks students are required to write a 2,500 to 4,000 word 'Reflective Appraisal', a "...structured reflection, analysis and evaluation...and personal appraisal of the process they are undergoing..." (Student Handbook 2004: Modules 6 & 11, Critical Appraisal). At the end of the final term they are required to write a 'Critical Re-Assessment', a "...personal account of a creative and artistic journey, with reflections on their strategies for dealing with any opportunities, conflicting pressures and demands that may be created by the nature of the 'inner' work and the creative 'industry'..." (Student Handbook 2004: Module 16, Critical Re-Assessment).

For the purposes of this research I examined samples based on tutors double marking. The marking criteria were as specified in the M.A. Course Document.

##### **Academic Years: 2002-03, 2003-04, 2004-05**

For each of the above academic years, I selected 3 Reflective Critical Appraisals from each of the first two terms, and 3 Critical Re-Assessments from the final term.

Reflective Appraisals:  $3 \times 2(\text{terms}) = 6 \times 3(\text{years}) = 18$  Reflective Critical Appraisals

Re-Assessments:  $3 \times 1(\text{term}) = 3 \times 3(\text{years}) = 9$  Critical Re-Assessments

I examined a number of random samples of Appraisals (between 5-10)

*Fig.4.6.c(i) - Selection of Students' Reflective Appraisals*

## **4.7. Data Management Mechanics**

### **4.7.a. The Storage and Retrieval of the Data**

#### *1. Documentary Material:*

- Reflective Appraisals/Critical Re-assessments: Box filed under Document, Term and Initials of the participant (e.g. John Smith's first Term Critical Appraisal would be filed: CA.1.JS)
- Other solicited documents, drawings and photographs: stored in labelled A.4 envelopes.
- Formal Documentation: Official files and personal filing system.
- All signed forms & correspondences were filed in a locked personal filing system.
- Personal journals with field work observations and other notes kept in personal study library at home.

#### *2. Interview Material:*

I used two digital Memory Sticks (see 4.4.c.). The interviews were recorded and the material transferred to my personal laptop where they were stored as a document. The memory stick was then given to the transcriber who returned it to me after transcription. An e-mail attachment of the transcribed interview was then sent to me and the oral recording wiped from the transcribers computer (see *Appendix 2* for the Transcriber's confidentiality agreement). I transferred the attachment to my documents, named, numbered and dated, and deleted the e-mail and attachment. I was then able to listen to the interview and read it at the same time, check for any inconsistencies or errors and then begin to immerse myself in the material.

### **4.7.b. Data Analysis Procedures**

I found the gathered material moving, rich in meaning and deeply human in content. I have also been very conscious of William

Wordsworth's maxim that "*...to dissect is to murder....*" and have realised that to analyse is also to interpret.

My main sources of reference for the analysis, apart from Glaser and Straus (1967), have been: Lofland (1971), Tesch (1990), Reissman (1993), Titchen and McIntyre (1993), Rubin and Rubin (1995), Coffey and Atkinson (1996), Kvale (1996), Seidman (1998) and Bryman (2004). I attempted to understand and digest their writings on analytic procedure before tentatively beginning the analysis. I referred to them, back and forward throughout the process of analysis, gaining confidence and gradually beginning to map out the analysis, sometimes clearly recognising the rationale for decisions, at other times allowing tacit knowledge to dictate coding and thematic decisions. It was an iterative process, often slow and laborious, but at other times, rapid and apparently straight forward.

In order to carry out a constant comparative method of content analysis I decided, after a preliminary attempt, against using any form of qualitative analysis software. Nvivo software, to which I had access, confused my thinking, and rather than spend the considerable amount of time it would have taken me to master the software, and given the moderate amount of material and the small scale of my research project, I found the use of my laptop word-processor and Word for Windows [2002 version], using embedded comments, perfectly straightforward and adequate to cut and sort, label, record extracts, and track changes from my transcribed interviews.

## **4.8. My Process of Interview and Documentary Analysis**

### **4.8.a. Period of Familiarization**

Between April and July '06 I collected eight interviews (6x 3<sup>rd</sup> Term interviews and 2x 1<sup>st</sup> yr out interviews). During this time I listened to them on my laptop and as the transcripts arrived back from the transcriber, usually a week or two after each interview, I checked the written word with the recording and made any changes resulting from mishearing or mis-transcription. I listened to each recording or part of a recording a number of times, making any mental or written jottings that occurred to me either in my research journals or annotating the texts, obeying no formal structure of thought, allowing familiarity with the material and listening carefully for any subtext or contradictions and allowing the narratives to paint what pictures they would.

### **4.8.b. Reduced Narrative Profiles**

The summer academic break (August '06) gave me the time to focus on the material I had collected. In order to ensure I had reviewed and understood the interview material and to become more deeply familiar with it, I wrote Reduced Narrative Profiles of each interview (av. 2,500 words), for Meaning Condensation (Kvale, 1996). (See *Appendix 9* for examples)

### **4.8.c. Participant Verification and Member Checking**

A copy of each Reduced Narrative Profile was sent to the relevant participant, inviting any amendments and to rectify any interpretive errors at this stage (N.B. the profiles were returned to me over a period of months and any comments or amendments which bore on my coding or schematizing were incorporated into my research - one

interview was heavily amended, a couple slightly amended, the others were left 'intact'). The amended sections related to information that the participants felt would be personally compromising. (See 4.3.e., 4.3.f.)

#### **4.8.d. Preliminary (Stage 1) Coding**

[Preliminary (Stage 1) Coding Themes were stored on a memory stick, before progressing to Stage 2 Coding, facilitating the audit trail.] I began to segment the interview text into 'commonsense' meaning units (Kvale, 1996), in order to elucidate some basic categories within which I could begin to handle my material. This initial open coding process, which was a dialectical process of intuition and rationality (Reason & Rowan, 1981), was temporally thematized according to the course structure, and more abstractly into structures of experience. I could see a pattern emerging and mentally I was making connections and building interpretive categories, although I wanted to delay the imposition of categories for as long as possible, attaching only tentative labels to the coding, hoping to let the participants speak rather than defining what they were saying.

As I reflected and coded I noted occasional thoughts:

*"...I am struck by how much D talks about her sexuality and E about fitting in to the culture. Do students come with their own agenda and find what they are looking for in the course? – does the course hold a glass up to each student to see their own reflection..."* (Diary Entry 22/6/06).

*"...I think, perhaps the course is the opposite of professional socialization – it is a de-socializing process, often from their previous 'schooling', bringing people 'back' to 'themselves', their own sensations, emotions...it is opening them up to the world – it is not 'specialization' or 'professional deformation' but freeing them from the constraints placed on them from previous education, training and*



*enculturation. The course doesn't 'train you to act', it allows you to do more fully whatever you wish to do by helping you to 'get in touch' with yourself - : i.e. by taking away barriers of self consciousness and layers of imposed ideas, shoulds and oughts of one's previous socializations – plus offering specific skills..." (Diary Entry 28/6/06).*

During August after I had completed reduced narrative profiles I noted: *"...It has been a worthwhile exercise – achieving its objective of forcing me to look closer at the substance of the interviews, helping me to notice the words they use, and stimulating further thoughts and questions (N.B. also important for accuracy of transcripts – listening to the original voice on the laptop (e.g. would = wouldn't)!!..." (Diary Entry 7/7/06); and also "...the (following) notes are from jottings taken during the writing of the reduced profiles, mainly referring to categories which re-appeared: but is this because they exist – or are they stimulated to become categories through my pre-determined suppositions..." (ibid.)*

At this stage I began to draw a number of linear and spider graphs attempting to view the coding and categories in a way that I could more easily visualise the interconnections, unnecessary categories, repeats of codings and possible story-lines through the themes. (See Appendix 12)

I continued to write down reflective notes and thoughts as they occurred:

*"...It would appear to take a major disruption, usually a relationship split, to catapult students into training..."*

*"...I wanted to do something that was about me...so was she doing something that was not about her?..."*

*"...They have intellectual knowledge, but not a harmoniously developed intuitive knowledge, emotional understanding, physical freedom or spiritual peace...look at Marx's definition of un-alienated*

*work...” “...Our lives as a form of madness (disjointedness) - Art as a counterbalance giving harmony and understanding...”*

*“...Is the course a way of healing oneself, of putting oneself together again, a socially acceptable way of making sense of oneself, ones desires, ones spirit?...”*

(Diary Entries, Aug '06).

At the same time as I was allowing myself to speculate on grand theory I was having more practical problems:

*“...I appear, after two days work, to be unable to format or understand how to use ‘Word’ in order to facilitate my coding process – I am now unclear what I’m doing at all!!!...”* (Diary Entry 10/8/06).

A week later I was in a happier frame of mind:

*“...I have now grouped into preliminary categories all eight interviews and have ended up with about 50 categories. I am now going to stop and reflect and read for a couple of days. I will then re-group all the material into more accurate and refined categories – to do this I will photocopy and use hard copies to play with before transferring them to my laptop – which I must do in such a way that my audit trail is visible...”* (Diary Entry 16/8/06).

I completed my Stage One coding with fifty-seven fuzzy themes (Tesch, 1990), with descriptive labels such as ‘Being an Actor’, ‘Dreams’, ‘Screen Acting’, ‘Nature of the Group’, ‘Necessity of Securing a “Proper” Job’, ‘Views on Tutors’, ‘Coping Strategies’, ‘Confidence’ and ‘Health’.

#### **4.8.e. Analytic Reflection**

My reflection process, at this stage, involved a biographical introspection in an attempt, I think, to comprehend why I needed to do this research, to discover the roots of my own drives and their relationship to the drives of my participants. The material I had

gathered had affected me and had humbled me and in reviewing my own biography I was drawn to T.S. Eliot's poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1969):

*"...I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two..."*, but I felt that I had also...  
*"...heard the mermaids singing, each to each..."*. I too had...  
*"...lingered by the chambers of the sea  
By the sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown..."*

I felt that:

*"...This research is an attempt to understand the sea-girls and the sea-boys – to pay homage to their songs and to thank them for allowing me to hear them...."* (Diary Entry Aug '06).

However, as I relate in my reflexive essay (*The Struggle for Comprehension, Appendix 1*) I had a number of years left, at this stage, before I began to more fully comprehend the underlying roots of my own drives.

#### **4.8.f. Coding Themes (Stage 2)**

By the end of August '06, my diary records that I had re-categorised some of my codings and studied the documentary evidence:

*"...The Reflective Appraisals concentrate on the craft development of the actor, particularly in the second and third term. The first term is more "the shock of the new". Some of them, particularly the women, are eloquent and poetical in the descriptions of the freedom and joy they experience in the training. The overall impression is again, of liberation, of idealism and of a great sense of purpose..."* (This freedom they experience may, of course, be due to factors other than the

course. The shedding of the responsibilities of previous employment may play a factor here!)

*“...The Termly Appraisals are a very rich source of the students’ reflections on their craft learning. Descriptions of: their technical understanding and application: their emotional/psychological approach and feelings...”*

*“...There does not appear to be any contradictions between what I am hearing and what I am reading, between the verbal interviews and the written accounts: this is triangulation: as what I observe also confirms what I am reading and hearing!...”*

*“...How do I construct my story...How do I bring life to this world...?”*  
(Diary Entries 28/8/06).

Over the following months (September to November '06) I collected the final six interviews and subjected them to the same process as the first eight. I amended and supplemented my preliminary coding and refined and compared my categories and emerging themes and reflected on and changed my spider graphs (see *Appendix 12*), which I was also using as an analytical device. Through this process of axial coding I felt that my data was slowly yielding some of its information and that an organising pattern was beginning to emerge. This interpretational analysis became my Coding Themes (Stage 2). Some of the themes from Stage One, e.g. ‘Health’, ‘Dance’, and ‘Atmosphere of the Building’, remained stable, other themes were re-grouped and became more specific, e.g. ‘Oneself as an Instrument’, ‘Language of Sensation’, ‘Reasons to Train’ and ‘Incorporation of Selves’.

#### **4.8.g. Analysis of Documentary Material**

*Triangulation, Positive and Negative Cases and Internal Verification:*

During this period of Interview Analysis I was verifying and checking my growing 'data-base' of information, knowledge and understanding, looking for correspondences, corroborations, anomalies, contra-indications and contradictions within the Solicited Documentary Evidence which I had collected.

I subjected the sample of 27 Critical Appraisals and Re-assessments which I had selected to a number of close narrative readings and dwelt inwardly on them, noting common stories, turning points and realisations; common words and language, including word choices and professional jargon, metaphors and themes. I looked for common value systems, desires and dreams, work and personal relationships and attitudes to money and finances. I subsequently segmented and coded them for content analysis and compared the findings with the findings of the interviews (See *Appendix 13*).

At the same time I immersed myself in the random samples of the other solicited material (for examples, see *Appendix 14*), continuously reading, or in the case of the left-hand drawings, looking at them and the three-dimensional models, looking at photographs of them, reflecting on them and allowing them to speak to me through quiet listening (Moustakas, 1990). For example, attempting to reconcile a drawing which failed to represent a student's legs with the student's actual use of their legs, or a figure which represented the student as particularly large or small with the student's revealed view of themselves.

#### **4.8.h. A Common Narrative Emerges from my Collected Material**

By the end of November '06, a common narrative was beginning to emerge from my data, from which I constructed the story of a journey. *"...A journey from dissatisfaction and unfulfilledness to greater*

*personal fulfilment and understanding of and belief in oneself. A journey of spiritual and creative transformation through personal and creative challenge in a safe and non judgemental environment...”*  
(Diary Entry 11/11/06).

I was beginning to view the course as a narrative of self-discovery for participants, and began constructing a story about an accelerated year of self-construction, influenced by my understanding of Polkinghorne’s view of the self as an actualizing potential and of participants greater awareness of themselves as narratives, of seeing themselves as a process of becoming, allowing them to both retrospect and to imagine a choice of possible futures, (Polkinghorne, 1988). I was beginning to see a story of personal empowerment, psychic and emotional health and wellbeing in correspondence with a consistent story of their lives, gained through the experience of the course.

#### **4.8.i. Coding Themes (Stage 3)**

For my third order categorisation I listed three broad analytic categories (Student Experiences of Training to Become an Actor; Becoming an Actor; and Being Out There), in order to identify a simple conceptual schema. Within each broad category I indexed a number of themes which I differentiated by their commonality into relatively homogeneous groupings, and within those groupings I defined in-vivo sub-categories (bounded by the descriptive language used by the participants) for facilitating analytic induction and abductive reasoning, in order to interpret my research questions. For example:

(Broad Analytic Category)      Students Experiences of Training to Become an Actor.

(Theme)                              Making the Decision to Become an Actor.

(Sub Categories)                  ‘Something vital to connect to’

‘Visions of my future’

‘My kind of school’

Identified stage 3 coding themes arose from interrogating and reflecting upon the interview data resulting from the research questions, supplemented by documentary evidence and observation. I have used the categories as an organising system and as a heuristic device, following Tesch (1990); they are used to bring an order to the material and are not classes for their own sake. In revising this thesis I have slightly reorganised and renamed categories after further reflection.

## **4.9. Presenting the Data**

It was during the period of analysing the material that I first began to consider presenting the findings in some kind of fictionalised form – perhaps as playlets, conversations and dialogues, poems, short illustrative stories – having considered Stake’s case study methodology, and being influenced by Laurel Richardson’s and Elizabeth St. Pierre’s concerns relating to ethical considerations (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005; Richardson, 2002b).

I had commented in notes relating to my own biographical considerations as *“...of course, a fiction, an interpretation – at a particular point in time, in a particular context, hardly recognizable I’m sure, even perhaps to those intimates who have travelled with me through this journey for periods of time...”* (Diary Entry 17/8/06). I had also been drawn to re-assessing the Introduction and Appendix through Francis Fergusson’s classic study ‘The Idea of a Theatre’ (Fergusson, 1949), and Ortega y Gasset’s great essay ‘The Dehumanization of Art’ (Gasset, 1948), in order to inspire me and to free me from some of my ‘provincial’ habits of mind and providing a way of clarifying direct impressions (Fergusson, 1949).

I was reminded of the definition of 'plot' (arrangement and structure of incidents, the action of the play) and 'action' (the unfolding of the plot through the medium of the being of the actor) – and the possibility of narrating my findings through the fictionalised, anonymised and edited actions and words of my participants began to formulate in my mind. Could I tell my story through the actions of the performance? In my biographical reflection I wrote,

*"...As an artist I have attempted to approach 'reality' through my senses, through my feeling, through my body, through my instincts – and less importantly, through my intellect – now, as a researcher, I am inverting the process and attempting to approach 'reality' through ideas I have about it – knowing, of course, that the 'reality' I am studying will remain elusive. I want to understand more clearly, through examination, what are the lived experiences, the thoughts, the feelings, the understandings, the loves, fears, dreams, hopes and aspirations of the students that have recently undergone a process of training to be an actor. My intention is to reflect and think about the written and verbal material I have collected and analysed and to ponder on its possible significance – in the light of my own experience and guided by the literature in the field. I make no claims for the generalizability of my small case study, which must be seen in its temporal and spatial context together with the biographical context of myself..." (Diary Entry 06/07/07)*

How could I combine human science research method with an equally disciplined artistic form, to produce a piece of work which would illuminate the research findings in a way which reflected experience most directly? The poetry of reflecting the experience of actors through the form of a play was both appealing and appropriate and the nature of the form suggests a play-fullness and a refusal to pretend that the results of any research are somehow 'true'. At the same time it would be an acknowledgement that the purpose of playing, as Hamlet says, is *"...to hold, as t'were, a mirror up to nature..."* and as the narrator, Tom, says in *"The Glass Menagerie"*, *"...I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of*



*truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion...*" (Williams, 1948).

#### **4.9.a. Finding the Presentational Form**

For some time I struggled with the question of presentational form, and the further distillation of the categories and a description of their characteristics. The categories were rarely finite, but "...fuzzy..." (Tesch, 1990) as a matter of emphasis. On 20<sup>th</sup> Dec. '06 I wrote in my Diary, "...my concern is to get nearer the processes and contexts...", as I attempted to understand how the participants' decisions were made to begin training as an actor. For the presentational form I wished to create a world, a situation, an emotion, and considered and experimented with various juxtapositions of alternative perspectives to give a rounded picture, spotlighting ironies and paradoxes, perhaps using a devil's advocate, or through fictionalised interviews, dialogues or letters to an interested friend. All forms which had been used successfully in literature and indeed, had been used by Stanislavski himself in the most famous of all books on acting technique (Stanislavski, 1948).

I outlined my 'breakthrough' in presentation in a Diary Entry, on Dec. 19<sup>th</sup>:

*"...To present my findings in a selection of dramatic presentational styles could confront a number of challenges:*

- It will create a 'world' which conjures up actors and acting*
- It will allow the actors themselves to speak in their own words*
- It will allow 'directions' to be given which will indicate emotions, expressions, body language, spatial relationships, sub-text etc.*
- It is a series of forms which are familiar to me and forms which I can manipulate with a certain aesthetic judgement of form*
- It will highlight the created nature of research – it is an artefact, in and of itself – not 'truth and reality', but, like art, can reflect a truth*

and a reality.

- I can attempt to be 'true' to the 'essence/spirit' of the research through aesthetic/intellectual rigour, while changing, editing and clarifying my arguments.

- It will allow the reader to become familiar with the participants and their experiences within a context, personalities may emerge and individual lives may be highlighted..."

However, the next day my Diary Entry records:

*"...I'm struggling with how to present my findings. How much do I summarise what I have heard? How much do I use their words? How much context do I give? I have huge amounts of material – how can I retain the specificity and at the same time generalise and illustrate – without losing their voice...?"*

It was not until nearly three months later and a number of false starts, that a basic outline of the present *"Drama-documentary Film – From Thanatos to Eros"* was conceived, originally as a Romance in Four Acts titled *"A Time To Dream"*. At that point, I intended to write a play of the actors' experience, together with an accompanying commentary. The idea, used by Plato in his Dialogues, and by George Bernard Shaw and Oscar Wilde, would be

*"...a dramatic presentation set in a community of practice where a group of mature students are learning 'artistry through reflection and practice', charting the changing nature of their relationships, to themselves, others and the profession for which they are being trained, observing, investigating/attempting to understand their experience as they begin to prepare themselves for entry into an uncertain and overcrowded industry. My foregrounded questions would be:*

- *Why do they do it?*
- *What drives them?*
- *How does the process work?*
- *What do they go through?*
- *How do they cope?*
- *What happens to them?..."* (Diary Entry, April 06)

The voices would be those of the participants themselves and the writer.

Gradually the idea began to take shape as I 'created' the screenplay from the words of the participants that had become so familiar to me over the preceding months from their interviews and the solicited data, using the most telling and revealing instances of the stories I had been privileged with.

I began by,

*"...Creating a character profile of each character, plotting each 'typical' character journey through the year, using interview transcripts and reflective appraisals - Plot the year's timetable from the academic year planner - Outline each term's story..."* (Diary Entry, April '06).

In the event, this 'plan' was not slavishly adhered to, and much of the work was written through a far more internal and organic process of gradual development. In a way the form finally 'wrote itself' from the material and I comprehended Moustakas (Moustakas, 1990) and Polanyi (1983) when they posit that the basis of heuristic discovery is the revelation through tacit knowing.

My objective in presenting the collected material partly through the medium of a script of a fiction, a "Drama-documentary" film, was also inspired by the painter, Francis Bacon, who, when discussing Van Gogh, said, *"...I believe that realism has to be re-invented. It has to be continuously re-invented. In one of his letters Van Gogh speaks of the*

*need to make changes in reality, which become lies that are truer than the literal truth. This is the only possible way the (artist) can bring back the intensity of the reality which he is trying to capture..."* (Bacon, 2003).

I wanted to find an aesthetic rendition of the phenomena I was studying. As Moustakas describes heuristic presentation, *"...In the creative synthesis, there is a free reign of thought and feeling that supports the researchers knowledge, passion, and presence; this infuses the work with a personal, professional, and literary value that can be expressed through a narrative, story, poem, work of art, metaphor, analogy, or tale..."* (Moustakas, 1990). My search was to find a presentation which could reveal accurate and vivid dimensions of the experience with a powerful relationship to the core meanings of the data and the participants who could remain 'intact' and un-fragmented into 'research findings' at the same time as disguising and protecting their identity.

#### **4.9.b. The Ethical Dimension of my Presentational Form**

It was also partly in response to the ethical dimension of confidentiality that I began to consider narrative and alternative forms of presentation as suggested by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), possibly involving poetic ethnographic texts or as St. Pierre (2002) explores in 'Circling the Text', using elements of Deleuze's ethical principles, and Deleuze and Guattari's figurations of the rhizome, the fold, the nomad and haecceity, or pleated texts as explored by Laurel Richardson (1997; 2002b). This form of presentation might, I believed, communicate certain aspects of my research more fully, for as Kvale (2002) points out, contemporary understandings of the conception of knowledge create an increasing awareness of more creative forms of conveying research material, as well as protecting the anonymity of the participants. St. Pierre (2002) suggests that using such figurations as

an ethical practice can, in fact, help in releasing oneself from habitual ways of thinking and conceptualising the world, allowing one to produce metaphors and texts of lives that may be less harmful.

The use of more experimental forms, or Creative Analytical Processes (Richardson, 2005) would find a direct correlation with both the subject I was researching and participants' professional practice, which disassociates language and meaning and explores a more directly experiential process of communication which would embed ethics inextricably and irreducibly within the nature of the research process, both in the research method and analysis. Just as the meaning of qualitative research is held in its entire text (Richardson, 2005), making its form and content indissoluble, so the process of acting cannot be understood from language alone but only in the embodied commitment to it can both the actor and the audience experience it. When an actor interprets a text, it is not the text as interpreted through language, but the word as embodied in the person of the actor, giving direct experience through the total expression of that person within the heightened context of the spatial and temporal circumstances

The data is the participants' experience as they train as actors and my methods need to be congruent with their lived experience and the written form of the research congruent with the lived world of my participants.

#### **4.9.c. The Rationale for my Intended Presentation**

In order to reveal the problematic nature of representation and to echo the subject of my research, I intend to part-present my findings in the form of a 'drama-documentary', a screen play, ***'From Thanatos To Eros'***, which follows a group of student actors' experiences before, during and after their training.

The form has the possibility of creating a world which conjures the

atmosphere and ethos of the case study under consideration. It allows the actual words of the research participants to be used. It allows directions to be used which may indicate emotion, expression, body language and subtext. It has the possibility of engaging the reader in a narrative which may be close to the experience of participants' voices and at the same time highlighting the created and creative nature of the research act itself. The form allows the possibility of the reader/observer 'getting to know' the research participants and their experience within a context where their individuality can emerge and the temporal process of their training and relationships both to themselves and others may be foregrounded. The form of a play allows me to be 'true' to the essence of the research through both aesthetic and intellectual rigour, whilst changing, editing and clarifying my understanding. This is in the spirit of writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson and St. Pierre, 2005).

Through the creative process of writing a dramatic presentation of my data I attempt to *"...imaginatively project (myself) into the life of another..."* (Eisner, 1976; p.6, cited in Tesch, 1990) and therefore open myself, following Moustakas (1990), to intuitive visions, feelings, and sensing that go beyond anything I could record, think about or know in a factual sense.

Such a presentational form also allows me to take cognisance of voice, reflexivity, text and representation and of Bakhtin's notion of utterance and dialogicality.

#### **4.9.d. Voice, Reflexivity, Text and Representation**

The problem of voice, the status of reflexivity and the complexities of textual representation, especially as displayed in the move towards forms of representation that deal directly with human emotion, such as narrative and literary forms, are possibly the three most difficult areas

of contemporary research. In 'Working between Languages', Hole (2007) suggests that issues of representation, voice and authority are evident throughout the whole research process, from conceptualisation to the publication of the findings. Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest that the dangers of authority and representation may be averted through creative texts which push the boundaries of social science writing, deconstructing accepted forms and crossing disciplines which differentiate poets, playwrights, storytellers and researchers in order to subvert the hidden power relationships embedded in many conventional representations of the world.

Donna Haraway's viewpoint regarding positioning, in which she suggests that "*...limited location and situated knowledge.....allows us to become answerable for what we see...*" (Haraway, 1988; p.583), resonates with the phenomenological viewpoint and my own experience of teaching acting technique, following Stanislavski's theoretical position of situated cognition that an actor cannot be somewhere in general, but must always be in the here and now (Stanislavski, 1936). Stanislavski's commitment to specificity and involvement in the moment, in order to reveal the universal from the particular is common to the artistic vision of seeing "*...the universe in a grain of sand and eternity in an hour...*" as William Blake's stanza from 'Songs of Innocence and Experience' (Blake, 1970) suggests. It is in this spirit that I have used the phenomenological process of identity in manifolds, moments and aspects in my analysis and the presentation of my data.

The context and situations within which I have placed my collected data in the part presentation '**From Thanatos to Eros**' are imaginative, used as illustrations of the lived-world of the participants, reduced from the interviews, observations and documentary evidence. The scenes outside the confines of the community of practice are invented manifolds, using the students' words within an entirely

different context, used with the objective of explicating the intentionality and noetic structure of the participants, understood through my interpretive sensitivity, personal reflection, tacit understanding and sense of integrity to the spirit of the inquiry.

Although all the participant members checked and verified the Reduced Narrative Profiles of their own interviews, none have read or corroborated the screenplay. My methods have been corroboratively based, but not the presentation of the data. As the screenplay is an eidetic reduction I have used elements of character and elements of evidence to create the world-of-experience-of-the-course.

#### **4.9.e. Dialogicality and Multivoicedness**

Dialogicality underlies the concepts of voice and utterance and emphasises the nature of language as being reciprocal and dialectical in nature, constantly influencing and being influenced by context. This has influenced both my understanding of my interviews and the part presentation of the evidence as a screenplay, which has taken into account the notion of dialogicality in supplementing a more orthodox presentation with an 'imagined' world, which may reveal more than the less contextualised presentation. Bakhtin's critique of linguistic analysis, that it treats utterances as if they had meaning in and of themselves, echoes Stanislavski's axiomatic notion in his 'system' which states that an actor cannot be somewhere in general, but must always be in the here and now (Stanislavski, 1936), emphasising the central significance of the given circumstances to any role.

#### **4.9.f. The Title: '*From Thanatos to Eros*'**

The title of the part presentation and the title of this thesis '***From Thanatos to Eros***' was inspired by Freud's metaphor and concept of the instinctual unconscious drive in every human being, towards either life or death, which he discusses in "*Civilization and its Discontents*" (Freud, 1929). The drives he identified, Trilling (1972; p.155) writes of



as *"...the ceaseless effort to survive (being) matched in strength by the will to find peace in extinction..."* ; the drive for unification and oneness in constant tension with an aggressive destructiveness I have equated with the inertness of the empirical ego and the creative urge of the transcendental ego towards self-actualisation, and I have used it as an essence of the nature of the course and the desire of the students. As Picasso is popularly quoted as saying, *'In order to create one must first destroy'*, and Freud himself uses a 'dramatic' quote, Mephistopheles, from Goethe's *'Faust'*, *"...For everything that comes in being is worthy of destruction..."* (Freud, 1929). Freud sees the meaning of the development of civilization itself as being the struggle between Eros and Death, *"...between the life drive and the drive for destruction, as it is played out in the human race. This struggle is the essential content of all life; hence, the development of civilization may be simply described as humanity's struggle for existence..."* (Freud, 1929).

#### **4.9.g. The Final Forms of the Two Presentations of Data**

Eidetic reduction is the reflective process by which 'essences' may be made apparent. Essences are defined as the primary meaning of phenomena or that which makes the *thing* what it is and without which it could not be what it is (Husserl, 1982; Merleau-Ponty, 2002). It is through the use of eidetic intuition, a form of phenomenological Intentionality, that the data presentation ***'From Thanatos to Eros'*** in its manifolds of appearance (as scenes), has been constructed. Eidetic reduction (through which eidetic intuition may be reached) has also been used throughout the coding process of my data, together with other qualitative mechanisms as detailed in my Data Management Mechanics (see 4.7.).

The stages by which eidetic intuition may be reached is described by Robert Sokolowski's developmental process (Sokolowski, 2000). The first level is by the analysis of phenomena into 'typicality', finding an

association or similarity between phenomena; the second level involves the discovery of empirical universals; and the third stage demands the isolation of a feature that it would be inconceivable for the phenomena to be without, in other words, a necessity or eidetic universal. My coding themes were generated from this third stage. From the positing of eidetic universals the process of the eidetic intuition of essences becomes a creative, indwelling, reflective process. Imaginative variations are 'played with' in order to push the boundaries and test the phenomena, seeing what elements might be removed before the phenomena 'explodes' or 'shatters' as the thing it is. In this way the eidetic necessity is reached by imagining what is not possible, or as Sokolowski says, "...a necessity comes to light in the impossibility of what we tried to imagine..." (ibid.; p.180), so through eidetic analysis, using imagination, we are taken beyond empirical induction towards a deeper, though not definitive, insight or disclosure of essences.

The screenplay is a form of eidetic reduction. It is an intersubjective dialogic text written to capture the essence of the researched course through the four existential structures of lived-space, lived-time, lived-body and lived-human relations. It was constructed after hermeneutic reflection on my themes derived from my collected data. My aim was to capture the spirit, atmosphere, and lived reality of the course through identity in manifolds.

The scenes were constructed to illustrate internal-time-consciousness, objective and subjective time. My intention has been to illustrate the students' progression through and after the course, using notions of the presence and absence of empty and filled intentions as the students' verbal signative intending becomes more specific through craft practice and students' displacements of their internal self through their revealed intentionalities, and the noematic and noetic aspects of their perceptions, memories and anticipations as they project themselves into the future or remember their past.

The transition and struggle to develop categorical intentions and constitute their identity as actors and gain the possibility of self-actualisation through the discovery of their own authentic truth and meaning through propositional inquiry, reflection and confirmation, is the subject of the following Chapter Five. In this chapter the generated themes and their constituent elements, emerging from hermeneutic reflection and eidetic reduction of the data analysis of interviews, written documentary evidence and observations, will be presented and discussed. This is a presentation of the findings attempting to reveal the essence of the participants' lived experience of their training in relationship to the relevant literature.

#### **4.10. Summary**

In this chapter I have considered my research paradigm, research design and the methods used in the study.

My objective in this study is to understand, through the iterative process of conducting the research, the nature of the internal and external challenges the students undergo on the course and the lifeworld of both their and my experience. I have articulated a phenomenological process based mainly on the theoretical work of Merleau-Ponty, and contemporary theorists, using methods of qualitative interviewing which have focused on the participants' perceptions of their lived-body, lived-space, lived-self and experienced time, studying documents written, made and drawn by the participants, and researcher observations, deriving from the concepts of Intentionalities, Reduction and Intersubjectivity. I have surveyed my methods of qualitative analysis and the rationale for the two presentations of the data based on phenomenological reflection and eidetic intuition in order to reveal the essence of the students' lived experience of the course.

In the following *Chapter Five*, I present my findings as themes and elements and discuss the data in relationship to the relevant literature.

**Chapter Five:**  
**A PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF MY**  
**FINDINGS**



## 5.1. Introduction: “Becoming an Actor”

In ‘*A Struggle for Comprehension*’ (Appendix 1) I explore the genesis and development of my research questions which I define in 4.1.b. as:

- What factors influenced the students’ decision to take this course?
- What was the students’ experience of the course?
- What do students believe have been the factors that influenced their experiences?
- How do they feel about their experiences?

I also wished to understand how the researched course might enable participants to realise their personal and artistic potential, and survive as an integrated person within the highly competitive professional industry for which they are being trained.

*Chapter Four* examines my research methodology and the ensuing challenges and issues involved in relation to the knowledge I wish to acquire. I discussed my research design and methods, data collection, analysis and the presentations of my findings.

In this chapter the themes and their constituent elements emerging from hermeneutic reflection and eidetic reduction of the data analysis of interviews, written documentary evidence and observations will be presented and discussed in relationship to the relevant literature, followed in *Chapter Six* by the screen-play ‘**From Thanatos to Eros**’.

Participants’ descriptions of their experiences of the course generated four major themes:

- 1) Getting Here
- 2) Not just here to have a laugh
- 3) Unearthing the Person

#### 4) Being Out There

The chronological nature of the participants' descriptions of their experiences follows from the structure of my interviews which were temporally constructed to follow their developmental journey from before to after their time on the course. In this discussion I have chosen pseudonyms for the participants. The key to references can be found in *Appendix 16*.

##### **5.1.a. Getting Here**

This theme illustrates the recollected experiences of the participants before undertaking the course, in relationship to their biographies, their understanding of acting training and their research into drama schools. The data suggests this theme is composed of three main elements:

- *Something vital to connect to*
- *How I got here*
- *Expectations*

The narratives of participants concerning their lives and careers before commencing the course bear remarkable similarities to each other, despite their different ethnic, national and gender differences. Their expectations of what an acting training would entail were dependant on their previous experience of acting or their familiarity with others connected to acting. Participants' own enquiries into the different trainings offered by drama schools appeared to stretch from the most carefully researched to the most arbitrary, and once introduced to the training, most of the participants were surprised at the content of the training and their preoccupations and concerns began to manifest themselves.

##### ***Something vital to connect to***

Without exception, albeit with different emphasis, all participants spoke



of their decision to train as an actor as emerging from a recognition of their own unhappiness, the fear of having an unfulfilled future and the need, as Susan described it, *"...to stop and start again and do something that was about me..."*. Susan had reached a point in her career where, *"...I was 30...and I could just see years and years of doing the same thing...and I didn't really care about people in my life... I was quite burned out..."* (I.7.AS).

Roger was certainly not *"burned out"*, in fact his professor at university had suggested he take a PhD, but Roger had decided, after an M.Sc. in chemistry, to work in research and development with an international company, until, *"...my supervisor said, 'you need to find something you really care about doing', ...and I knew at that point that's the way I felt about acting..."* (I.11.DW).

Stella had been working as an investment banker for a year when she had a *"...strained relationship with my father and that affected my family life...I was very unhappy and my parents were starting to go through divorce and that also made things unstable and unhappy for me and also I just wasn't happy as a banker and I think I knew six months into the job that I didn't want to be doing this when I was 40 and I also felt that if I didn't try to move myself into this field (acting) at a younger age then I would lose opportunities as I got older..."*. She had acting experience as a university student but, *"...When I started working a career job which was very stressful and I had to work long hours I couldn't act...and I thought, 'Oh my God why is life so crap? Oh right, this is why life is so crap', and that's why I started to think about acting and actors..."* (I.2.A).

Colette, in Australia, had almost suffered a breakdown before realising her wish to change her career choice, *"...I was getting really depressed, I had sort of quite severe depression actually and something was going wrong, I was really angry, really upset so then I*

*made this decision... and took a year off and at the time it was a really, really big decision because it meant changing everything I thought my life would be for the past ten years you know I had this thing I would go to school, go to university, be a vet and that's it, so it was a really big decision at the time..."* (I.3.L). Grace, in Mumbai, was also suffering a serious depression, *"...I was causing myself a lot of mental problems by doing something I didn't want to do...there were lots of splits starting happening. I did go into psychiatric help; I did go through a depression...I felt I had no inner core..."*, and when she finally made the decision to become an actor, *"...it made me cry and I hadn't cried for so long and I needed something to connect to and there was a connection happening and I stopped doing all of my various jobs..."* (I.13.T). Sophie, feeling *"...lost at that point and I knew that I wanted to be an actor..."* had made her way from New Zealand and had *"...spent two years doing horrible jobs..."* (I.9.M), and Elizabeth, a dancer in Vienna, *"...just knew that I could tell stories and not just with my body..."* (I.10.G). While Ted, in Sydney, with a similar sense of ennui, just, *"...had no set responsibilities, no house, no mortgage...nothing holding me back from doing it..."* (I.12.K), and Diane in the UK, having finished as an undergraduate studying drama, *"...knew in my heart I wanted to specifically do another year..."* (I.14.H), and Martha, having taught children in Ireland after her M.A. in literature, thought, *"...time, time, time, I had been waiting too long for this, you know, I just got to go, go, go, go, so there you are..."* (I.8.M).

The decision to train as an actor, sometimes having previously trained and practiced within another profession, was for the majority of the participants, a major existential decision, often preceded by considerable anguish and with a belief that, as Stella expressed it, *"... I always understood it was near impossible to make it as an actress... I suppose I felt that I didn't have the means or the connections or the opportunity..."* (I.2.A); Colette felt similarly, *"....I absolutely loved it and always sort of dreamed of acting but it wasn't the practical thing to*

*do....I think that I never considered it was something that would be feasible..." (I.3.L), and Emma even faced social disgrace, "...So I couldn't be an actor or performer, it's frowned upon in Africa. You know if you want to say you brought up your children properly then you become doctors and engineers and pilots..." (I.1.A).*

It took Emma some years before she was able to fulfil her vision of becoming an actor, changing continents and her way of seeing the world before she finally began to realise her dream. Her story, which is related in *Chapter Six - Scene 8, 'Where have you come from?',* together with other participants' narratives, most clearly illustrates the decision of the participants to radically change the accepted pattern of their lives often reaching a crisis point having, perhaps, exhibited Sartreian 'bad faith' to the point of 'nausea', exhibited by many of the participants' high-achieving status within their field. They had '*gained an academic first*' or achieved a '*professional status*' or '*done the approved thing*' or '*satisfied my parents*', or they had, as Sartre's famous waiter, which he describes in 'Being and Nothingness' (Sartre, 1957) played their part to the point where they escaped it by 'over-doing' things. Sartre describes watching a waiter in a café, whose over-perfection at his job betrays it as a game of 'being', rather than being-in-itself. It is a form of self-deception. The data seems to suggest a similar pattern. Through fully accepting the dominant narrative emerging from their background, rather than reacting against it and following their inner dictates to achieve a personal authenticity, the participants may be seen as over-fulfilling expectations until the contradictions between their inner compunction for authenticity and achieving accepted goals led to a physical and psychological breakdown. This appeared to be a pattern from the data, although not always as dramatic as Emma's story.

In the telling of their stories the participants seemed to exhibit a powerful need to express themselves through acting and this was

evidenced by the huge changes in their circumstances, familial, economic and geographical, which they undertook in order to pursue acting as a career. It was a decision which they made, as the above quotations evidence, from a huge emotional and psychological drive, sometimes overcoming major cultural obstacles. The accounts of the participants' changes, their depression and other illnesses, as recollected by the participants as afflicting them and pre-empting their decision to completely change their way of life, may also be understood in relationship to Bourdieu's ideas concerning the relationship between people's actions and the social context in which they occur; these complement Sartre's ideas in relationship to their psychological or Intentional being, where the participants might be seen as attempting to transcend the limitations of their perceived possibilities, through a Heideggerian view of Intentionality which sees the directedness of consciousness towards objects as being made possible by the power of consciousness to transcend itself through its ability to project itself into the future, in this way seeing itself in terms of what could be rather than what is. In order to fully realise themselves, to become more fully what they perceive they are, the participants must search for authenticity, as Susan put it, "...by doing something for me..." (I.7.AS), and they view this possibility as being embodied in themselves as actors.

The participants' description of their previous lives suggests, in Bourdieu's terms, that they ceased to value the cultural capital of their cultural field, which was mainly economic or status driven and had been determined by their families, education or culture; that this had led to a rejection of their cultural field (in participants' cases; law, teaching, commercial scientific research, medicine, veterinary medicine, engineering) at a point where the future trajectory of their career was assured and an inner contradiction emerged between the possible reality of their future and their concealed or repressed desire for their future as an actor, which they had hidden, consciously or

unconsciously, because it was anathema to their habitus, which was their expected, accepted and recognised way of being.

That the participants rejected their previous cultural fields, which are commonly accepted as being dominant and elite, can be seen in the non-deterministic and dynamic relationship which Bourdieu sees as existing between a person's habitus (their individual attitudes and dispositions, which may be modified when it ceases to make sense) and the cultural field which creates the institutional rules and categories within which social practice takes place. Perhaps, having harboured a desire for a different cultural field, the participants were less caught up with what Bourdieu describes as 'illusio', "*...the fact of being caught up in and by the game, of believing...that playing is worth the effort...*" (Bourdieu, 1998). However, the power that the cultural field exerts over the habitus may be seen in the embodied illnesses of the participants' struggle to free themselves from it, which, as Bourdieu suggests, is modifiable but never entirely free of cultural influence.

### ***How I got here***

Although the fear of an unfulfilled future was common to participants, the amount of research put into training possibilities differed considerably. Stella went about it very methodically, "*...I had friends... who went into the business and I spoke to them and...to be honest I always kept...my fingers in the pie of media...so I spoke to friends and people...so six months in...I started to actually make bigger steps, bolder steps. I spoke to people, looked at drama schools, I tried to contact everyone and anyone I knew in the industry through any kind of contact that I had and spoke to them to get different opinions of what they thought...*" (I.2.A). She had spoken to major theatre producers and attempted to break into the industry directly through

organising a showcase, before applying to a number of major drama schools, recommended by the National Council for Drama Training.

Will had been equally diligent in his research, and having finished a degree in law at Manchester, he flew to Hollywood. He had wanted to travel anyway, for the sake of travelling, and having completed his degree and satisfied his compunction to do something socially acceptable and from which he could eventually earn a reasonable income, but not wishing to practice law, he took the opportunity to explore his less 'realistic' desire, *"...I wanted to just go and get a feel for the place...I was doing telesales with a bunch of other actors which was great fun...but also I went and auditioned with an agency on Hollywood Boulevard with the worst American accent, but got in with that agency and I found that most of the work they were finding was just extras stuff...all I really learned from LA is what the courses are like out there and also just hanging around with lots of other actors from other parts of the world and just meeting them and finding out what they were up to it was a great experience..."*. Will then left Hollywood and went to New York, where *"...I actually sat in on some classes...I spent the last 4 weeks in New York and I went to the New York Film Academy and sat in on classes to see what it was about, I think that gave me even more hunger, so when I got back I was racing to get to drama school but unfortunately for me it wasn't realistic with the debts I had, so I had to get the money first..."* (l.4.B).

In Mumbai, Grace had taken a degree and worked in film production offices for three years, hoping that this work would satisfy her inner desire to act before she broke down and finally, *"...spent 4 days on the computer compiling all these drama schools in England that I wanted to apply for...and I filled in all the forms and then we had a discussion about where the money is coming from...it was only when I got my auditions calls I thought 'Oh my God... I am going to go to England!'* and never at any point did the flow stop until I suddenly had 3 colleges

*to choose from...and that's when suddenly, the gravity of the whole thing caught up with me...I was going to drama school which was a realisation of a 6 year dream..." (I.13.T). Whereas in Australia, Ted, "...just felt it was the right time...I had a British passport and wanted to travel....there was nothing holding me back or keeping me from doing it...". He had travelled to Europe with his girlfriend, and while he was in London, "...I had been told by several people who had auditioned or been at drama school....you have a feel about one place over another..." and when he auditioned, "the sun was shining, and it was all such a wonderful lovely atmosphere..." (I.12.K). Diane had auditioned for the undergraduate course before going to university when she was 17, and after gaining her first class degree in drama, which had not satisfied her need to act, "...knew I wanted to re-apply for the same place, I was ready to do something intensive for one year..." (I.14.H).*

## **Expectations**

However much or little research the participants put into finding out about the course, their expectations of their experience often differed from their experienced reality. Most of the participants thought in terms of acquiring skills, particularly vocal skills and possibly movement and dance skills and many of them expected more production work. Miles was typical, "...I think I had a very different opinion to how the training would be...I thought it would be a lot more doing productions...and work on accents...I did remember specifically thinking it would be a lot of acting work when I first came on the course...I am getting, rather than what I expected...I am getting what I needed..." (I.6.J); and Stella, despite her extensive research was surprised that, "...I was so used to being told that I was a performer and that I was good that I didn't expect anything other than that and it was a shock to my system that everybody else was good..." (I.2.A). Sophie was surprised that, "...I don't know if this sounds really (funny)

*or not but I certainly expected to make loads of chums and have a really great time and that became a different thing, it became a bit more about me and I mean...I was sharing the experience, but that wasn't necessarily the crux of what was going on..." (I.9.M). But Grace's expectations were, "...strengthened, it has been strengthened...I came with a dim outline of what I really wanted... just an instinct, and I think that is being reinforced over these last weeks and I have realised how I wanted that and how I need that and so its like an unfolding process which is happening right now..." (I.13.T). However, Brenda was shocked, "...I don't think I expected it to be as intense emotionally, but I think I expected it to be more intense physically but not as much, the first couple of weeks at drama school were a completely, complete total shock to me..." (I.5.AT). Diane had come straight from university and explained what she felt was the difference, "...some people (at University) are into technical things, lighting and all that, which is fantastic, and then some people are just there to get drunk and take drugs, you know, Uni-life, and I knew I was ready to be around a group of people who really wanted this and I mean I certainly live with some incredible characters who have such drive I mean, my drive, I thought I had a drive but I have met people and thought, 'Oh gosh I am not half as passionate as you'...I saw it as being everybody prancing about in coloured leggings and a lot of singing and dancing, very arty farty...I was petrified of coming in the first day..." (I.14.H).*

The participants' expectations of training may be seen to be based on their previously acquired knowledge and experience of education and training, which may be characterised from the participants' expressed views above as being extrinsic, instrumental and based on the intellectual acquisition of information and skills in the company of others who had a variety of motivations, drives and objectives. As Bourdieu (1990) suggests, the power that our cultural field exerts over the habitus is modifiable but never entirely free of cultural influence;



our view of our future will be conditioned by our past. How far those accepted or internalised values and understandings regulated, determined or affected the participants' response to the acting training, which they so desired, without consciously understanding, but possibly, through Intentional transcendence intuitively drew them toward, may be glimpsed in investigating the following themes from my data.

### **Summary of Getting Here**

The issues that arise from the data in relationship to my first research question; 'what factors influenced the students' decision to take this course?' as evidenced by the above excerpts from their narratives, suggest that the participants' main concerns and pre-occupations revolved around ideas of life and job satisfaction in relationship to their inner drive to fulfil themselves, of wanting to pursue their Intentional desires which they had suppressed, often for years, following family or social pressures, or a belief in such a future being impractical or unobtainable. That this desire, finally erupting, led them to investigate their dream of acting, which they envisioned as a mainly instrumental and technical process, auditioning for the course, sometimes after considerable research, on the basis of its institutional reputation, or through having personal contacts and choosing the course on the basis of an inner compunction, a tacit 'feel' or 'instinct', rather than any articulated or fully conscious concept of what the training entailed.

#### **5.1.b Not just here to have a laugh**

The theme of 'Not just here to have a laugh' illustrates the participants' changing and developing experiences, perceptions, understandings and relationships to themselves and others, the training process, the course and the environment, as they progress through their training. It is composed of several elements which were common to all the

students:

- *The Place*
- *The people in my life*
- *The Work*

### ***The Place***

The data suggests that participants' experience of the environment of the course, in terms of the buildings they used and the generic atmosphere might be designated as being both purposeful and emotionally 'available' or open. It was a physical and social context within which they felt, on the whole, very comfortable, although a minority of them preferred the more overt theatricality of the main building to the rather gentler and more private space of the Catholic Centre. Emma particularly enjoyed the main building, "...*I am one who really loves the main school, I love the hustle and bustle I want to be able to walk down a corridor and hear people singing and I really wanted to feel that I was at drama school and so it was a shock to my system to come to a building where that wasn't going on...*" (I.1.A), but the other participants were more circumspect. Ted voiced the majority opinion, "...*it's a bit of a mix really...It's a semi public space, therefore you have members of the public coming in and out...but its fine... having been over at the main building where noise just doesn't stop, I have come to realise that we are fortunate to have a quiet place to pursue our work...*" (I.12.K). Brenda was particularly keen on the smaller Catholic Centre, "...*it was fantastic to feel like we had that space, that was ours and I know that's not the reality, but it was our rooms, it was very much...our space to me and it felt like I knew who was going to be in this room and who was going to be in that room and I liked being there a lot...*" (I.5.AT). Miles was even a little prejudiced against the main building's atmosphere, "...*I do feel that I am an outsider a little bit in the main building...just going through there would be screaming people and musical theatre people singing their heads*

*off and things like that, I don't think its a particularly good working environment especially when you have only got a year on the course, I think you need this solitude which you have here....". And he explained his dislike as feeling as though, "...in the same atmosphere (as in the main building) I wouldn't have been able to train properly as well as I have..." (I.6.J). Stella was particularly specific about her opinion of the Catholic Centre, "...it doesn't feel institutional.... it's a very unique sort of building...a very bizarre place...its not a drama school first of all...and it is not like a school in any way either, its like a centre where classes take place...and also it's a public building...so there is always the possibility of some quirky or interesting or just different people being around and it's a shared space so it does not feel like we own the space, we are sharing it with other people ...which gives it a different dynamic...it doesn't really interfere with the ownership that I have or we have of the space, it doesn't interfere with that...we can happily co-exist..." (I.2.A). From the data, the participants certainly felt a sense of 'ownership' of their training space and appreciated the focus which the building allowed them to have – something they clearly felt lacking in the exuberance of the main building, shared by hundreds of other performing students.*

The feeling of the necessity of an atmosphere which was conducive to focused work came across very strongly in my data. Colette was very positive about the atmosphere in classes and felt, *"...with most people they are amazing people to work with because most people have done something else...and I think in general there is a lot more life experience and a lot more of a mature attitude...I think people are more real here (than in the undergrad. classes), it's more like real people going to be actors..." (I.3.L). However Brenda felt the atmosphere could be very competitive, "...sometimes it's not nice getting positive feedback because of the repercussions....when you do well, its difficult, because you do feel pleased within yourself but you don't want to appear pleased because then you appear like you are*

*gloating...that's going to happen with anything, any kind of job anything you do ...there is going to be people who strive to be the best..." (I.5.AT). Miles felt it was very dependant on the particular group he was working with. He commented, "...when I was crewing with the other group there was a very different atmosphere because they had more of a kind of 'We are only here to have fun.' ...there was a lot more, not mucking around, but a lot more sort of playing, in between doing stuff...so it just depends on which combinations of people there are. On the whole most people are really focused and sincere..." (I.6.J).*

Blame for poor classes (defined as classes where they felt learning failed to take place, through lack of focus or time wasting) was distributed among other students, themselves or the tutors, as Colette said, "...Everybody here is really keen to be professional, they are not just here to have a laugh, they want to take something from it...we know (we) have got a really intense course and we really want to milk it for everything we can and when we feel that we have 2hrs where nobody is really that concerned it feels like, 'why do we even bother!', you know we should really be stirred up about what we are doing and progress, this just feels like we are just jumping through hoops, you know just getting ticks in boxes!..." (I.3.L). Will was more concerned with his own errors, "...a bad class for me is one where I have frustrated myself and I've got pissed off at the fact that I am pissed off - if that makes any sense...and I have let it affect that class so I have an hour where I could have got some really good work done but instead I have got annoyed at some blip and I have let it get the better of me..." (I.4.B), and Ted felt that his group wanted more in a director than being "...a very easy going guy and a nice bloke. Sometimes I think people find that we actually want to work longer and harder...you should be really pushing and stretching people, so you are looking for what you don't have rather than what you do have...so you want your tutor to be as driven as you feel..." (I.12.K).

The data suggest that the participants felt that a very different ethos pertained to the course than they had experienced at university, not surprisingly emotion, passion and goal-driven behaviour was valued on the course, as Will explained, *"...I feel more driven...than I did in Uni, the hours, the nature of the course being practical. It's not like if you have had a heavy night mid week in university and you can stagger into the back of a lecture or stay there and vaguely take some notes and go unnoticed amongst the mass of 200 people. You come in and you are expected to do a scene with somebody, you have to be bright and alert and ready to go. So I think its more focused, it's more professional, the feeling of doing a more practical trade as opposed to academic..."* (I.4.B), and Will, again, *"...there are certain people on the course who I...am envious of, you know I see people like P\*\*\*\* who is very open and again will say what's on her mind...you will see her do something and you think, 'Wow, shit I wish I was like that!..."* (I.4.B). Emma commented, *"...In drama school I have noticed that there are a lot more egos that need boosting and there are a lot more people who are sensitive. I have seen people cry because they've been told their work wasn't good enough. Academically there is no difference except in Uni we wrote a lot, we did a lot of research, here we don't write a lot...we do a lot of practical work, so at Uni we were in school 3 hours a day, here we are in school 10 hours a day..."* (I.1.A).

The discipline was also very different from the participants' previous experience, but was welcomed and respected. This is unsurprising, given the driven nature of the mostly independently-funded participants, even if they found it difficult to adjust to, as Martha explained, *"...The discipline was really good for the course. I found it difficult at the start, but then, maybe that was because of my situation at home, but I definitely found it difficult, probably because I had been teaching for a couple of years so I was used to calling the shots..."*. The data suggests that her next comment was true of many of my

participants, *"...It's so hard to be here...this is my chance, I have got to use it, I have got to do it and I think that a lot of my problem is just putting a lot of pressure on myself with it. I don't feel like I have the luxury to just sit back and relax into it..."* (I.8.M). Unlike Martha, Elizabeth loved the discipline, *"...just the rigour of the training, I loved that, I absolutely loved that...I desire to go through things fully, I didn't shirk away from any of that and physically it was very easy for me. I was used to that rigorous physical training. (It was) harder to do the rigorous other training..."* (I.10.G). But a more common attitude was voiced by Ted, *"...I think it is necessary...of course we are not all children anymore, we are not waiting around to be spoon fed, we have all got some form of life experience and therefore a more mature professional attitude so we understand that. There is still great debate over what is considered a valid reason for being late or not turning up..."* (I.12.K), and Diane commented that *"...I certainly think the procedure that's in place is certainly enough to make me think I don't ever want to be late..."* (I.14.H).

Illness was by far the main reason why the participants might not be able to attend the course and the data suggests that the participants appeared to enjoy robust health, on the whole, given their close contact with each other within institutional surroundings, as Stella commented, *"...I have been surprised at how my general health has improved massively, I did not expect that. I expected to be healthy, because its physical activity, but I didn't expect to be quite so holistically, generally my health has improved..."* (I.2.A), and Will seemed, *"...pretty happy and calm about being here, not stressed by anything, the odd times sleeping patterns have been disturbed a little bit when the mind has just been ticking, not being allowed to rest, but in general yes, I am feeling fine..."* (I.4.B). Brenda, who was finding the course quite difficult, when I spoke to her, admitted, *"...I don't eat as healthily because I can't afford to, and my immune system is down because when you are emotionally exhausted your body follows and*

*you are physically exhausted as well so I have slept a lot more this year than I ever did at Uni. I think because we are doing a lot more physical exercise and its emotionally exhausting, so I just need to be in bed by 9.00 or 10.00pm every night...*" (I.5.AT). But otherwise the participants found themselves, like Miles, having, "...*nothing major, I have not been close to having a day off...*" (I.6.J), and Grace, "...*I am feeling more physically healthy than I did back home...*" (I.13.T), and Diane, "...*I love this structure, I like that a lot and I think that is helping health wise...*" (I.14.H).

The participants' daily routine, during term time, was clearly circumscribed by the course; the long hours, the discipline, the physically- and emotionally-charged work, their commitment to the work and the demands they placed on themselves left them little time to socialise outside the course. The data concerning their typical day suggests early starts, dependent on how far they had to travel, an intense and involved day, becoming hungry before lunch, communal lunches, tiring but involving afternoons followed by preparation work after school, a frugal social life and early bedtimes, sometimes being unable to switch off thoughts of work. It is a consuming, disciplined and self-involved daily life, which is recorded in '**From Thanatos to Eros**' in *Scene 17 - 'Jema's Day'*.

The data analysis suggests that the participants' experience of the environment of the course was a physical and social context within which they felt, on the whole, very comfortable, although a minority of them preferred the more overt theatricality of the main building to the rather gentler and more private space of the Catholic Centre. Participants certainly felt a sense of 'ownership' of their training space and appreciated the focus which the building allowed them to have – something they clearly felt lacking in the exuberance of the main building. Their belief in the necessity of focused work, of needing to get the very most out of their limited time on the course and the value

put on intensity of feeling and rigorous classes came across very strongly in the data. The participants felt that a different ethos pertained to the course to that of a university; emotion, passion and goal-driven behaviour being highly valued on the course. The strict discipline was also very different from the participants' previous experience, but was welcomed and respected. Illness was the main reason why the participants might not be able to attend the course and my data suggests that the participants appeared to enjoy robust health, on the whole, given their close contact with each other within an institution. The participants' daily routine, during term time, were circumscribed by the long hours, the discipline, the physical and emotionally charged work, their commitment to the work and the demands they placed on themselves, leaving them little time or energy to socialise outside the course.

### ***The people in my life***

The data analysis suggests that the most vital relationships in the participants' lives during the course were their colleagues and their tutors, often creating or highlighting complex issues for their previous relationships outside the course.

Acting training is essentially a group process, and the participants highly valued colleagues with whom they could communicate easily and who were viewed as being good to work with, defined in terms of generosity, commitment and 'professionalism', which was seen as the ability to '*get on with it*' in terms of the work-load, although those that saw themselves as having those qualities were not necessarily the most popular; egotistical attitudes were definitely frowned upon. Stella was very clear about her requirements, "*...I think your colleagues and your peers are very important to your developing and learning. You really work as a team and you are really giving to other people and you have got to be generous and you have got to work within a group*



because otherwise it just doesn't work and I have found it difficult to work with one or two individuals and I have found generally I feel like I am in a different 'play' to a majority of individuals on this course...I don't feel that my artistic goals are the same as the majority of people...I do feel that I take the work much more seriously and I find that I have a lot more passion for the work...and I feel that I have a more positive attitude..." (I.2.A). Will felt that his colleagues were good to work with, "...What I have loved about this course is that everyone is really generous, I would like to think of myself as a generous actor, making sure that I am giving the other person what they need as well, and I suppose one element of fear is that you are going to be surrounded by all these crazy 'ra-ra' people..., always clambering over each other to get their voice heard, but it's not been like that at all, there's been a real range of people on the course..." (I.4.B). Other participants also commented on the surprise they felt regarding the range and type of personalities on the course, Brenda commented that, "...on this course we are very different people from very different walks of life...I have mixed with people and learnt things about different class, different race...its just very interesting and its wonderful...I think originally people segregated themselves off..." (I.5.AT). Miles was surprised at what he experienced, "...I could comfortable talk to anyone on the course...I think people have been quite open and friendly from early on. I came and I thought I'd be like one of two black people on the course, they would have one black guy and one black girl and maybe a couple of Asian people and so I was surprised that there was a handful of black people on the course..." (I.6.J). The participants' concern about their colleagues began early, as Will expressed it, "...from the very first day I sat down when we were waiting to register I was looking around...there was no one of my type...you know...in appearance, everybody looked so different...there is a real mixture...the atmosphere is good amongst the students, I have had no problems with anybody, like I said I had one professional qualm with one person which was ironed out very easily..." (I.4.B).

The participants' concern about 'types' of people on the course may reflect the awareness that the participants have regarding the nature and pervasiveness of type-casting and vast over-crowding in the industry, as well as reflecting the necessity of what Levine and Moreland (1993) describe as being, *"..The social knowledge that new members must acquire to participate fully in the life of the group..."*. Certainly the data would agree with Levine and Moreland's assertions that group members often develop a *"...shared image of the prototypical member of their group..."* (ibid.) which reflect the specialised work roles of the members; passion and generosity being most highly valued and cliques, gossiping and absences being rated lowest. Cliques and 'bitchiness', although mentioned as occurring in smaller groups, did not emerge as a major feature of the relationships between the participants, possibly because of the changing group patterns of work within the course, or maybe because of its understood destructiveness to the work process. Passion, enthusiasm for the work and personal commitment featured in almost all the participants valued characteristics, to the extent that Susan even felt, *"...like I was cheating somehow because I wasn't like this (as passionate as others) and there must be other people out there who were like this that hadn't got on (the course) because I had their place. So I felt guilt about that..."* (I.7.AS).

Again, because of the nature of the work which requires close cooperation, important friendships developed between group members. Looking back a few years after the course, however, Sophie recalls, *"...I remember being very sure that I was going to make these amazing life long friends and it was going to be really cool and exciting and I remember being a bit disappointed when I wasn't connecting with people straight away, in the beginning in the first couple of terms...in retrospect I have made some really important lovely creative friendships but they are not the people that I thought I would have*

*made and people that I still care about now aren't necessarily the people I would go and sit with in the lunch hall..." (I.9.M). The necessity of intimate relationships which slowly develop through the course, which may or might not last beyond the course was explained by Brenda, "...I felt alienated in the first term...but people were friendly and I feel that I have made some nice friendships...but as I say, other people can't understand because this process that you go through, a person outside wouldn't understand what we do...it's a very vulnerable thing to go through and for other people to see you, most people in your life, the closest people to you aren't going to see you in those sorts of states ever. I think you make and I have made some very good friendships..." (I.5.AT).*

The intimate, vulnerable and revealing nature of the work may be seen as similar to the *"...uncertain or threatening environments..."* (Levine and Moreland, 1993) which bonds group members. This is described by a number of commentators, including Fine (1979), as creating a strong group culture. This may be also seen in the relationships and collaboration between the group members, the *'newcomers'*, and the tutors, the *'oldtimers'*.

The data indicates both the importance of the relationships with their tutors and the values of the tutors deemed both positive and negative in the participants' learning experience. All the participants found the majority of the tutors professional and approachable, but there were inevitably, perhaps, clashes of personalities or ways of seeing the world. Brenda found the tutors intimidating at first and very different from her university experience, in common with the other participants, *"...I found them intimidating at first and put them on a pedestal, I still do to a certain extent...(They are) completely different from uni because you have a much more one to one relationship with your tutors, again because they see you go through certain emotions and also because they spend so much more time with you...so its just not*

*the same at all..." (I.5.AT). A similar sentiment to Brenda regarding tutor relationships was expressed by a number of the participants, "... It's individual with each tutor...personal and professional...I feel that I can talk to them on a one to one basis and I don't have to put up guards or be concerned that they would judge me in any way or worry about professionalism..." as Miles expressed it, "...I feel generally a lot closer to the tutors here than at university and I feel that I can talk to them more and they want to talk to me. It's more of an equal footing rather than the tutor-student separation..." (I.6.J).*

A genuine, straight-forward, grounded, approachable, face-to-face relationship with their tutors was highly valued by all the participants. Inspirational and individualistic, even eccentric behaviour was welcomed, as Roger commented a few years after graduating, "...The thing is (inspiring tutors) gets your blood flowing, it gets you excited, you want to go and study more you want to broaden yourself ..." (I.11.DW), and Diane commenting on a tutor said, "...she reminds me of someone out of 'Hogwarts' that reads star signs - very spiritual..." (I.14.H).

Passion was again highly valued by the participants, not so much, however, when it was directed against them, as Sophie recalled, "...I had a hard time with her from the beginning. I suspect we just didn't really get each other and she just got me wrong, like I was not really interested in pushing myself, which of course I was. I would put up defences and try even harder to be perfect and impress her with how much I am working and she wouldn't be impressed and I would just get so upset and so hurt I remember being desperately hurt..." (I.9.M). The need to impress the tutors came across strongly in the data, and Ted explained it as, "...I think it's mainly to do with commitment. I don't think this notion of being good is right. The notion of commitment, of showing the school and showing the tutors and so on that you are not simply here for a laugh, that you are not here paying a vast amount of

*money just so you can drag around and carry on and not do the work. So I think there is definitely this feeling of wanting, there is expectation..." (I.12.K). A visiting director who appeared not to drive the participants hard enough was condemned, discipline was valued, but understanding of participants' particular challenges was equally demanded.*

Both interview and observational data suggest that the ethos and value system of the course, regarding discipline, commitment, one-to-one relationships and openness had been internalised by the students and was fiercely defended. The tutor-student relationship within the course closely resembles Levine and Moreland's (1993) mentor-apprenticeship relationship which they identify as *"...providing career developing help and psychosocial support without requiring immediate reciprocation from their protégés..."* .

Working within a small, closely knit group of passionately involved people, the participants found difficulties and complexities arising in their relationships with friends and relatives outside the group. Participants' relationships with their immediate families ranged from strained, as Stella reported, *"...A strained relationship with my father affected my family life so generally I was very unhappy and my parents were starting to go through divorce and that also made things sort of unstable and unhappy for me..." (I.2.A)*, and Colette, *"...the fact that I had got these amazing marks at school and did academic awards was infinitely more important than getting into acting school and I always feel that I am constantly having to justify to them...my parents are teachers, one is maths and science and one is geography and they have come from very conventional backgrounds and so its really hard to try and get through to them that this is something just as remarkable..." (I.3.L)*; to the supportive, like Brenda's mother, who, *"...loves it, she thinks it's fantastic and she is incredibly supportive..."*, however, *"... my dad is supportive to a certain extent, but anything I*

*tell him, he just thinks its amusing, he doesn't really get it at all, its quite frustrating and it has put a bit of a strain on my relationship with my dad because we used to be very close..." (I.5.AT). Other participants' parents had made financial sacrifices on behalf of their offspring and relationships with their families were, for the majority of the participants, stable during their training. The same could not be said for participants' relationships with partners outside the course. Those relationships were seemingly put at risk by attendance on the course. As Susan commented, "...I really went through a very difficult stage when I was on the course and you know it really did feel very much like we could see why other couples were splitting up all over the place, I mean the amount of couples that split through the course was just phenomenal..." (I.7.AS). Although Brenda found, "...it has helped us hugely because he is unbelievably understanding. It has helped me to be a lot more open with him than I have been before..." (I.5.AT), but she was more the exception, as Sophie explained, "....definitely a few friendships went down the hole, but I notice on the course ...probably most of us had partners at the beginning and I think I was one of the only few that was still with their partner by the end..." (I.9.M). When Ted spoke to me he was convinced of the strength of his relationship "...My girlfriend and I have been going out for a number of years and we are extremely strong and committed and loving, our relationship is still strong, stronger, either as strong or stronger than it was, we were both aware and we both discussed the nature of our relationship and how it could change so we didn't walk in blindly..." (I.12K). Unfortunately, a few months after this, the relationship foundered, causing him a great deal of pain and confusion. After two-and-a-half years, Diane's relationship also failed, but not so disastrously, "...there was a bit of a parallel in a very freeing sense and although he is related to the arts, he had been quite negative about the fact that I was going into drama school and I didn't realise that there was a bit of a negativity there which I think I just laughed off or defended and since that's gone I just feel so much freer..." (I.14.H).*

How far the course and its demands caused the break-up of relationships or how much an unacknowledged relationship problem was a catalyst to the participants' decision to train at a particular time, thus bringing to the surface underlying difficulties, needs to be seen in the context of their justification and reasons for undertaking the course at this time and was seen by the participants in a variety of ways, depending on their emotional and temporal distance from the course, and may be examined further when investigating the participants' self-actualisation process later in this discussion.

### ***The Work***

All the craft skills taught on the course are compulsory. There are no 'optional' classes apart from stage combat, which takes place after school hours for those students who wish to take the British Fight Association awards. However it was clear from the data that more commitment was put into classes which the students favoured, or saw as more useful to them, in terms of securing work after the course, than in classes which they felt were not so vital. The data does not contain any evidence that the participants were concerned about grade assessments in terms of passing their degree. This was not a subject that was alluded to at all; their concerns were, however, heavily weighted in terms of professional employment and their perceived personal needs. Analysis of the data suggests that they saw their classes as ranging from '*exhilarating*' to '*frustrating*' and from '*...hating it at first...*' to '*...liberating...*'.

The participants tended to talk about the classes that most concerned them, either negatively or positively, and when questioned about the craft skills taken as a whole, they discussed the skills they were learning in terms of '*tools*' or '*techniques*'. This use of technical and specialised terms and actors' vocabulary (e.g. actions, obstacles, units

and objectives) which the participants began to use from early in their training and not always entirely accurately, may be seen as examples of Bakhtin's Ventriloquation, that is speaking through the language of the tutor (speaking through another voice within the specialised social language of acting), and then appropriating the language through its internalisation. It is an example of how social language both reflects and creates socio-cultural settings and how mental functioning is tied in to institutional practices through social languages. Often the participants' discussion of their craft learning would be excited and sometimes passionately felt, but not always clearly articulated. This suggests, perhaps, the participants were still in the process of fully internalising what they were learning. Vygotskian theory would propose that the mediational tools that the participants most use (namely mnemonic, language, and somatic sensation) had at this stage not fully passed from the interpersonal to the intrapersonal, or in the 'actors' language of Stanislavski, had not yet been 'fully inhabited' by the participants.

Here, in discussing their classes, was the greatest difference between those still experiencing the course and those having completed the training.

Collette, in her second term, found all the skills 'important' and a personal revelation, *"...I think Alexander has been exceptionally important because it...interrelates with everything and freed up everything and its helped voice and singing and acting in general. Singing was personally important to me because I love singing and I didn't realise I could sing as well as I did. Before all my life I really, really wanted to do music and I thought I had a bit of a voice but never thought I would actually be able to support it or be able to do it...So that was really important, because singing is really important to me. I think everything has got its purpose and everything has got its niche... object exercises are so important for learning how to approach a scene*



*and have been really important in learning how to forget yourself when you are doing things...so that's really important and then of course voice is important because of the mechanics of it..." (I.3.L). Will, also in his second term, saw the classes as, "...techniques to use, without being locked in stone...to have some sort of tools to zap into...it's given me something to hinge on..." (I.4.B), and in discussing skills as a whole, Will's personal preferences and the excitement of newly discovered possibilities tumbled out, "...Another thing that was unexpected like singing, never really thought I would make much at singing but I tell you what I noticed that I've got a bit of a voice...I really can't wait to get on to the stage and belt my song out because I am not thinking like, "Is this technically right, can I hit the notes the same as someone else?" I am not bothered about that - I just think, "God, this character is really funny and the audience is really going to like this guy"...whereas with acting...I wish I could apply the same sort of ease to my acting as I do my singing so I am working on that and I have learnt how to work on supported breath...I am not a very touchy feely person in my normal life, so when things like object exercises I feel completely fine being completely intimate and physical with people it just feels completely different for me from my regular self, so I can find elements of the course that assist me in what I am really interested in which is the acting...This screen acting...was brilliant to do and I just thought, "Wow! I need to spend more time doing this", because as soon as I finished I thought, "I could do that so much better, lets do it again right now..." (I.4.B). Miles, in his third term, was struggling to integrate the skills, "...It's been hard, because I feel sometimes what is strange about the course is that things are separated but they are all linked into one...so everything is kind of linked but then things are still...separate and then even though it makes sense to me I am still feeling like sometimes I am getting contradictions from different things...so there are these two forces constantly happening and going on in my head but I do know where I have got to go and where I have got to be...that's what I am finding*

*difficult...I have got to find the bits of myself which are useful which is more psychological and emotional thing but then exterior habits which aren't useful I have got to get out of and find...more freedom on stage and on screen..." (I.6.J). Roger, five years out of the course and having worked consistently was more assured, "...The course helped me enormously with getting me in touch with my body, getting me to understand that the body is something that can tell a story...(last year) ...I felt that I was beginning to understand the idea of the whole body being involved in telling a story as well as the text of the piece and I think that was something I wasn't aware of beforehand..." (I.11.DW).*

Working on the body through the close observation and practical study of animals was not immediately appreciated by the participants, like Brenda, who *"...felt really ludicrous doing it, and I hated it quite a lot...I had an attitude towards movement. I did enjoy it but I think I could have got a lot more out of it..." (I.5.AT). Towards the end of the second term, Grace found, "...a lot of fun in this class now. There was a time when it was just overwhelming but now it's just a lot of fun and everything stills...your mind stops working and it's this ferocious beast and everything stills and I love that feeling, it's a transformation..." (I.13.T). And Diane, commenting on the role of the tutor, "...sometimes I feel so frustrated. I mean there is one lesson, when your eyes are filling up and I was so frustrated because (my animal) just wasn't coming and (the tutor) saw this and she just said, 'Come out of it and when you are ready go back in it', and at the end I stayed behind and we talked about it, talked about ways of helping it..." (I.14.H).*

Discussing dance classes, Diane described her process as, “...warm up exercises which entails stretching on the floor, slowly building up and stretches on the floor and then you do a bit of ballet that stretches you and then you do some sit ups, that lasts about 3 songs long which is quite strenuous, but as the year progresses you do more of those and its very useful and then you begin your dancing, (the tutor) will show you the routine, step by step, again as the year progresses at the beginning he will do it a lot slower and as the year goes on he will show you and expect you to do it which helps you to see your improvement. Then you learn the whole dance routine and then you go over it and then you usually split the group in two and take it in turns to do the dance and when you have accomplished that you move on to the next one. I enjoy the way he teaches us because he knows he is giving us a difficult step but he doesn't give us that alternative and he will do that step 3 or 4 times he will take us through it sequence by sequence and what we need to be doing with our bodies but at no point does he give us the excuse of it's a difficult step. It's OK if some of you can't do it, all of you have to do it, all of you have to figure out some way of doing it. If it means that the rest of your body is floating in some sort of mid air while your hand is doing that difficult step then that's fine but everybody needs to do that difficult step...” (I.14.H).

In the data from participants' interviews, documentary evidence and observation, the participants may be seen to chart their experience of their skills training, often eloquently, as an intensive period of Cognitive Apprenticeship, what Collins, Brown and Newman (1989) describe as “...complex and important skills...(learned through) apprenticeship-like methods – that is, methods not involving didactic teaching, but observation, coaching, and successive approximation...”, and their developmental experience may be understood as examples of socially shared cognition based on the work of Vygotsky.

Diane, in describing her experience of her dance class above, where

her dance tutor had structured the activity in indexical not descriptive terms and encouraged different ways of de-composition, working through a process of collaborative and open learning, clearly describes the process of scaffolding within the zone of proximal development, that is the dynamic region where the individual may move from inter-psychological to intra-psychological functioning, through “...*problem solving in collaboration with more capable peers..*” (Vygotsky, 1987). Diane’s description may also be seen as describing a process of what Brown et al (1989) propose is ‘distributed’ intelligence. Bruner (1996) describes this as, “...*speaking of intelligence as not simply “in the head” but as “distributed” in the person’s world...*”. This would include, in the participants’ world of praxis, everything that they use to help their learning process; the studio spaces, the music, the scripts, their laptops, their props and costumes, as well as their colleagues and tutors – and most particularly, their own instrument – their body, their voice and what Chekhov refers to as their ‘higher creative self’ (Chekhov, 1991), differentiating this aspect of cognition from the analytical ‘intellectual’ intelligence.

As in the participants’ other craft training classes (illustrated in *Scenes 6, 9, 16, 18, 19* of **‘From Thanatos to Eros’**), Diane and the other participants are being scaffolded by the tutors to accept and relate to the nature of their own felt sensations of authenticity, as Cassie wrote about another technique class, “...*The object exercises required emotions and sensations to surface in a way that I wouldn’t normally have allowed. For someone so used to blocking my emotional ‘channels’, I found it a huge challenge to allow myself to ‘unblock’ them...watching other people’s object exercises throughout the term was a fantastic learning experience, with insights arising both from their successes and setbacks. Every exercise provided me with new insights...the group also developed a real trust through observing one another when in vulnerable states...*” (CA.1.SG), and this acceptance of their own feelings was echoed by Vivian, who wrote, “...*The greatest*

*lessons in which I have learned about truthfulness have been the object exercises...I was truly amazed at the feelings I had...*" (CA.1.SF). The participants appear to be learning to re-internalise and re-define themselves through the sensations of "...being within their own skin..." (Oida, 97), and also gaining the confidence to do so by learning to re-interpret their definition of their situation through intersubjectivity, both between the student and the tutor, and between the students performing and the students observing, created by the semiotic mediation of Bakhtin's Social Language (a speech genre which shapes what we can say and think about the world, and in the case of the above quotations, the language of Stanislavski's behavioural realism).

### **Summary of Not just here to have a laugh**

The data analysis suggests, then, that participants felt that the built environment in which they worked was conducive to their learning process as it felt largely un-institutional, personal and they felt a sense of 'ownership' of the space, although a minority missed the excitement and energy of the main building. Relationships, between each other and the tutors were cooperative, face-to-face, creative and disciplined, allowing a 'safe space' for a close working environment which was focused and concentrated, but felt that such relationships and personal work endangered previous relationships outside the course environment. The craft skills and knowledge obtained from the classes were seen by participants to be tied directly to the practice of their vocation; theory being directly embedded in practice. The work was often profoundly and passionately felt by participants suggesting they were undergoing rich and deep cognitive and emotional development.

### **5.1.c. Unearthing the Person**

This theme, 'Unearthing the Person', illustrates participants' psychological, spiritual and emotional journeys through the course,

recalling the narrative of change which they experienced in their ideas and feelings about themselves in the world. It is composed of the following three elements:

- *Like Being Asleep*
- *Getting the Crap Out of the Way*
- *Being Naked With Strength*

### ***Like Being Asleep***

This element illustrates the participants' retrospective descriptions of their experience of themselves before starting the course and is intimately connected to the element '*Something vital to connect to*' in theme 5.1.b. *Getting Here*. I have differentiated it in order to discuss the perceived states of the self-conception of the participants which they recalled as their being, before embarking on the course.

Without exception, the participants saw their previous 'selves' as less developed and less fulfilled before entering the course. They often described their previous self-image as comprising falsely conceived notions and pre-conceived ideas and attitudes which were diminishing, harmful, self-deprecating, self-critical, negative and fragmented, judging themselves against unexamined and taken-for-granted concepts of an unobtainable perfection.

As Gillian commented, "...I had never thought about my body as an amazing thing...I have never liked my body....throughout my life, my relationship with my body has shaped my choices and sadly impacted negatively on what I have taken from experiences..." (CA.1.AS). Abbie wrote, "...Before embarking on the course I felt...an inherent tendency to deprecate and repress myself...I had developed a strategy for coping with the world which was stunting my personal and artistic development..." (CA.1.CT). Joe described her previous state as being, "...comfortably shrouded in a mask I knew worked...I had chosen a

*young care-free happy go lucky teeny image as my way of coping with life in general...*" (CA.1.LF), and Vivian also used a mask analogy, *"....My mask hid insecurities about myself. It hid my fears of inadequacy. It also hid fear and curiosity and budding jealousy..."* (CA.1.SF). Colette, describing her self during the course in relationship to her previous self conception suggested she had *"...just come back into (my)self and am (my)self again - and to feel and to experience - you know it's just like waking up again after having been asleep for so long..."* (I.3.L).

These descriptions of a fragmented self, which, in one form or another recur throughout my data, whenever the participants, male or female, reference their past, may be interpreted as aspects of the alienation of contemporary humanity, as R.D. Laing wrote over forty years ago, *"... Our alienation goes to the roots. The realisation of this is the essential springboard for any serious reflection on any aspect of present inter-human life..."* (Laing, 1967). This view, which has been explored throughout the human sciences and has deeply resonated within the arts over the course of the twentieth century, charting the ever increasing spiral of self-delusion and dehumanisation of the world (from Kafka to Pinter, from Schoenberg to John Cage, from Picasso to Claes Oldenburg), may be seen in some contemporary art as veering into a hopeless Nietzschean despair, as in the plays of Sarah Kane. I have alluded to this sense of alienation in the element *'Something vital to connect to'* and I would like to focus on this element by viewing my data in relationship to the concept of the self as a narrative construction connected to the existential of temporality.

It is possible to more deeply understand the experience that the participants are undergoing throughout the course by considering personal identity and the conception of the self as Polkinghorne suggests in "Narrative Knowing and the Human Sciences" (Polkinghorne, 1988) as *"...an expression of a single unfolding and*

*developing story (and) we are constantly having to revise the plot as new events are added to our lives...".* Seen in this phenomenological light, the self is conceived as being socially constructed. We evaluate and understand ourselves specifically from the multifarious possibilities of our social context, constantly re-interpreting ourselves in the light of our changing perceptions of our past, our present and our imagined future. This is close to Bakhtin's dialogical understanding of the self, where he sees our experience being constructed through a dialogue with others, real or imagined, thus creating, through the structure of language within our social group, our experience of 'reality'. Hans-George Gadamer's and Buber's theoretical standpoints also stress the concept of relationships *between* people as being fundamental to our notion of selfhood. The socially constructed narrative understanding of the self suggests that we are a process, a dynamic telling-of-a-story, we *are*, as Sartre suggests, what we *do*.

The participants' description of their past must be viewed in the light of their present and their imagined future. Such powerful denunciations of their previous existence, as in the quotations above and in *'Something vital to connect to'*, must be seen in the context of the nature of memory, viewed as a form of stored up perceptions that we relive in the present, often projecting into this manifold that which we wish to see or believe we should see. The noematic side of memory has imposed upon it a self in the present, the noetic side, altering the perception of the past. It is a present which powerfully contains the participants' future hopes, dreams and expectations, which they envisage opening up after the completion of the course. A participant's self is an agent of remembering and *"...may be seen as an identity constituted between myself now remembering and myself then remembered..."* (Sokolowski, 2000). Their descriptions would allow the possibility that their present experience of the course was one of growing confidence and connectedness, of physical and emotional acceptance and a lessening of contradictions in their relationship to



things and people and a more hopeful view of their future.

The participants' reference in the two elements to '*masks*', '*layers*' and '*strategies*', of having '*...no inner core...*' or '*...means and connections...*', is suggestive of relationships which were shadowed by inconsistencies and denial, and proposes a changing present dynamic of their relationships to an acceptance and enjoyment brought about by a more fulfilling form of relationship and involvement in self expression and creative work, defined here as the authentic externalisation of one's consciousness; one's being-in-the-world, which I would like to examine in the next element, described by Martha (I.8.M) as:

### ***Getting the crap out of the way***

This element illustrates the participants' experience of their psychological, emotional and spiritual development during the course as they begin to actualise aspects of themselves through the practical process of the work and self-reflection.

At the beginning of the course the participants' experience was rarely comfortable, as Brenda explained it, "...we were asked to make models that we felt reflected us and I don't think I have ever analysed myself quite so much...I just judged myself and what others give me the impressions of. I don't tend to think of myself as how I perceive myself, so it was interesting for me to kind of delve into that, to try and find why I am like I am. The 'road map' I found incredibly difficult because it was in a room full of people that I didn't know...I liked the fact that you could make it a metaphor for something...but it was a bit of a shock that we were doing that because it was in the first two weeks and I found that quite terrifying because I didn't know these people and I was meant to be revealing all these things and although certain roads were only a metaphor, they were pretty obvious...I feel that there are very few people that know things that have gone on in my life and I didn't really feel that comfortable. I understand now the reason behind doing it but at the time I didn't really appreciate it..." (1.5.AT). Her description of her process was more extreme than the majority of the participants, but highlights a process that most of the participants experienced to some degree. "...I don't think that it was so much other people putting pressure on me, I think it was myself...At certain points within the first term I felt very unattached to the situation...I felt that other people were benefiting from it and I was not...I think it was when...we had the 3 or 4 weeks at Christmas...I had time to think and reflect and realise that I was putting far too much pressure on myself...I should have made the most of the experience rather than blocking it and analysing it too much...I came back with a fresh new idea I think...I wasn't absorbing it because I was putting too much pressure on myself..." (1.5.AT).

The want to succeed by putting pressure on themselves was common to many of the participants, and most found it took the first term to begin to acclimatise themselves to the course, and Martha gave an example, "...everybody kept going 'think about your feelings, think

*about your feelings', K... was doing a (dance routine) playing music about a couple breaking up and every time we did it I started crying and every time I laid down to do my tiger (in animal class) it reminded me of the dance which I also began lying down, so I got upset and I couldn't do (the class), of course she (the tutor) thought I was a lunatic or that I didn't care. I couldn't tell her because it just sounded ridiculous...A pretty disastrous beginning...I don't think I was completely on the ball until after Christmas..." (I.8.M). But for some, like Emma, "...I was like a little child going to an amusement park for the first time, seeing all the beautiful rides and Mickey mouse and I was so excited..." (I.1.A). Stella perhaps summed up the majority view, "...the nature of the training is that it's trying to explore the territory outside your comfort zone, so at the beginning I was a bit nervous about doing any kind of romantic love-type scenes, but I thought that as an actress I shouldn't have that block..." (I.2.A).*

The data analysis suggests that the participants found the process of re-negotiating their relationships to themselves in the world was often 'outside their comfort zone' like Diane, who found *"...you can think you know all about where your weakness are but actually they have not always been in the places I thought they would be...I didn't think it would affect me as much as it did inside...because I always felt quite sorted inside. Not really - there is a lot of clearing up to do and that was quite naïve of me. I found it quite hard and I felt quite unsettled..."* (I.14.H). An understanding of this discomfort, this 'lack of fit' between who they considered themselves to be before the course and what they were discovering about themselves on the course, may be gained from Trowler and Knight (2000) in their study of the induction of new faculty staff into the community of practice at a university in the United States; they found that the job of the neophyte was to establish 'intersubjectivity', a common set of understandings and assumptions with the activity system within which they were engaged. Their findings suggested that this *"coming to know"* is not easily achieved because

communication between the various elements within the community of practice contained frequent contradictions and conflicts which militated against intersubjective understandings. Levine and Moreland (1993) also found that conflicting values of individuals within groups required complex evaluating and negotiation as they began to reframe and reinterpret their identities in relationship to the accepted norms of their new work group or community of practice.

The way in which participants' self-actualisation takes place on the course can be understood through the way in which cultural knowledge becomes personal knowledge through telling stories; personal narratives which incorporate and reflect the researched activity systems and body of knowledge concerning what it means to be an actor and how one attains this position. Carol Cain's study of Alcoholics Anonymous (1991) discusses drinkers' transformation of their lives and self-identities through re-constructing and sharing their personal stories within the cultural framework of the community of practice of Alcoholics Anonymous, and this may illuminate the participants' stories as my data analysis suggests they struggled to develop the identity of being an 'actor', which involved their transformation from their self-view of being non-actors. The analysis suggests that students learn to re-interpret themselves as actors firstly through the acceptance of the definition of what constitutes an actor and then re-interpreting and adapting their behaviour in the light of the activity systems values, concepts and skills, gaining validation from the elements of the system, including each other, as they demonstrate this new understanding of themselves. As Ted explained, *"...I have gained a greater understanding of myself which is quite a big thing...coming to these realisations of who I am, what I am, what makes up me, and what this course is doing, is in the short period that we have been here is allowing that to happen more and more frequently and allowing it to happen through varied experiences and interaction with the 29 other students and the teachers and tutors that are educating us..."* (I.12.K).

In re-assessing their biographies, in the course of telling stories about themselves, as the above quotes suggest and in many aspects of their work, both in imaginative and physical craft skill acquisition, the students re-interpreted their self-identity, their past and their self-understanding in the light of the activity systems notions. Validity as an actor was viewed by the participants within the activity system as stemming from the students 'ownership' of their own felt and lived experience, and how that is translated into performance through the acquisition of craft skills which could be viewed as an emotional as well as a technical development. Although many participants, like Ted, found the process difficult to articulate, *"...I think that if you are not involved in anything like this you cannot and will not ever understand fully what happens, what happens amongst everybody, what happens to you personally. It's very difficult to explain to people...if you have no concept of it, it just sounds insane, it sounds crazy..."*, but he felt he understood that, *"...I need to find more and more connection, an emotional connection on the inside to lend a greater depth to any acting that I am doing and I am finding that..."* (I.12.K). In a very direct way, *"...their personal story is a cultural vehicle for identity acquisition..."* (Cain, 1991).

The re-framed identities which the participants developed over the course of their training had strong and powerful similarities as their enculturation process became internalised, as Martha succinctly summed up many of the participant's feelings, *"...My second and third terms were much easier as I got all that crap out of the way...I arrived and after two days I was like, "what the hell what's going on?" so that was the first term! The second term I loved because I decided, "Well I am here and I am going to make as much God damn use of it as I can. I had a fantastic time. I don't think you really realise what you are going through at the time..."* (I.8.M). For a few participants the process took longer. Susan recalled, *"...Towards the end of the second term I*

*started thinking, "Hang on a minute, I can use all of the stuff that I know...and the work that I had done before and bring it into my acting and not deny that bit of me, not have to pretend that I am something else" ...I don't have to be something that I am not..." (I.7.AS). Susan's comment might also be used to introduce the final element in this theme, which is:*

### ***Being naked with strength***

This element illustrates the participants' view of themselves as they came towards the completion of their course and began to look toward their future career as professional actors.

The data strongly implies that the participants felt unreservedly empowered by their experience of the course, both as an actor and as a person. Grace summed up her experience as, *"...feeling reinforced as an individual...its reinforcing me as an actor because I don't have to squirm nakedly. I can be vulnerable without being. Vulnerable is being naked with strength - and I can - I can reach it..." (I.13.T). Susan was very clear about her self development, "...This is kind of pretty amazing and I realised how powerful it was and how intriguing it was and how much you learn about yourself through doing it. You know I learnt far more that year than I did in any of the psychotherapy that I ever had and I have had lots! Because its just so frontier pushing..." (I.7.AS). Martha was equally clear, "...By the end of the course I was more straight in what I wanted...it makes an awful lot of things more simple and everything else just slots into place...I am more aware of what's important...I am more specific when I talk...I am probably a lot more emotional, I think that happened to a lot of people, in terms of connecting with your emotion and I'm a lot more forgiving of myself..." (I.8.M), and Miles also felt far more self confident and aware of his own authenticity, "...So I realise that there is no great big book that's going to tell me how to do it. I have just got to 'be' but to 'be' is hard - and I*

*have also realise(d) that being myself is more interesting than I thought..." (I.6.J).*

Although there were no dissenting voices from the experience of the participants' sentiments of relative fulfilment, confidence and self-awareness, there was, however, also a realisation that this heightened awareness was probably temporary and related to their context. Martha voiced a common apprehension, *"...there was certainly a point where it became about what was going to happen to me when I leave school, so it was like there was this nice cocoon for a while...and then I became aware of the fact...that I have to go out in the scary big world as opposed to just being an artist in a safe place..." (I.8.M).* The participants were, it appears from the data, aware that, as Susan put it, *"...There is something about the space that was created where anything was OK. There wasn't sort of constraints, 'you should do this, you must do that, don't do this' and I am not talking about rules and regulations, I just mean in terms of...having the space to get things wrong that gave me the freedom to play..." (I.7.AS),* but, even if the space was a liminal one, the data, as the above quotations suggests, strongly indicate that the participants profoundly gained what Miles identified as *"...an understanding of how those changes came about and...a language to be able to look at what's happening to me and find out how and why and then to use that to inform other parts of my life ..."* (I.6.J).

The participants' descriptions of the experiential process of their self understanding is verbalised in terms of their *'getting in touch with their emotions'*, of learning a *'language of sensation'*, of *connecting* from a fundamental place which is implicit and difficult to articulate but which resonates through their whole being. It suggests a powerful existential change which allows a freedom, a lightness and a tacit honesty to self and others and an appreciation of the world-in-itself, a re-enforcing authenticity brought about by the relationships created through the

interaction of their lived intentionalities. This can be seen, from a particular narrativist interpretation of authenticity, as a commitment to a course of action, following Nietzsche's (2007) dictum that one should become what one is by a free choice of dedicating oneself to whatever one wishes to be and accepting total responsibility for the composition of one's own story, becoming, in effect, the artist of one's own life, a possible temptation for those vocationally engaged in creating fictional lives!

Heidegger in 'Being and Time' (1962) suggests a possible interpretation of the participants' experience of self-discovery which is interesting to consider in the light of the participants' experiences before commencing the researched course. He suggests that it is the realisation of one's own mortality and the recognition of it, that provokes the possibility of viewing one's life as a finite process and therefore as something to be shaped and made meaningful, rather than experienced as random and disconnected events. It is an engagement with the possibility of death that can transform and provoke a person into an attempt to determine their life course and owning, that is, authenticating, their 'self'. Heidegger sees this process as identifying what is important to the individual within their historical and social context and pursuing their objective wholeheartedly. The participants' previous experiences (many of them viewing their lives as '*meaningless*', '*deathly*' and the course as being "...*Literally life and death to me...*" (I.1.A) as Emma commented), other observations which are discussed in the element '*Something vital to connect to*', and the participants' subsequent dedication to their chosen course, give some weight to this argument.



The participants' experience of self-hood and personal identity, from the analysis, would bear out the narrative and dialogical conception of authenticity, a socially defined and temporally dynamic concept, which could be seen as following passionately one's dreams and oneself as being defined by the steadfastness with which we hold on to those dreams. This suggests a subjective and capricious contingency to all meaning which depending on a personal point of view might lead to a Zen-like lightness, total despair or a rush to dogmatic religious certainties. Towards the end of their training the participants' empowered view of themselves might be viewed as being in a state of what Sartre, in 'Being and Nothingness' (1957) describes as transcendence, a being-for-itself, that is a selfconsciousness that is limited by nothing outside its own being and engaged in conscious acts. However, the participants' fears, summed up by Martha as "... *the big scary world...*" (I.8.M), is their conscious awareness of their own conscious activity, the facticity of their own being-in-the-world which leads to an irresolvable tension and an inability to find an existential stability.

### **Summary of Unearthing the person**

The data analysis suggests that the participants saw themselves prior to the training as less developed and less personally fulfilled, describing their previous self-image as comprising falsely conceived notions and pre-conceived ideas and attitudes which were self-deprecating and fragmented, judging themselves against unexamined and taken-for-granted concepts of an unobtainable perfection. However, through the practical process of the work and self-reflection, they begin to actualise aspects of themselves, which they experienced at the beginning of the course as disturbing and rarely comfortable, but developed through the course into an enjoyable and fulfilling discovery process. The analysis strongly implies that the participants felt unreservedly empowered by their experience of the course, both as an

actor and as a person.

How far the experience of the course influenced participants' development might be seen through the experience of those who have left the course and the final theme:

#### **5.1.d. Being Out There**

*Being Out There* illustrates the participants' reflective experience of the course in relationship to their professional and personal lives over a period of up to ten years after leaving the course. It is composed of the following two elements which were common to all the participants.

- *Respect for the craft*
- *Being connected*

#### ***Respect for the craft***

This element illustrates the participants' lived experience and relationship to their acquired craft skills subsequent to their leaving the course.

The participants had found the craft skills learned on the course to be a developing and essential feature of their experience. Roger, four years out of the course, felt that *"...The course gave me the kind of techniques, the tools that I felt I was lacking, so...I built up an idea of the huge number of different approaches that there are for an actor to approach whatever they are doing and I think during the whole year I learnt not only techniques but I also understood that...the actor doesn't ever stop...you can always be open to learning new ideas, new methods, new methodology, new techniques and I think that was very much from the course and the group of people that were on my course..."* (I.11.DW), and Sophie, three years out, felt similarly, *"...I think that I have been processing what I have learnt for the last two*

*years- so on some level I don't feel that I left my training when I left here..." (I.9.M).*

Individual skills; voice, movement, dance and singing were mentioned by participants who felt that they had discovered new or previously unrecognised areas of acting, but it was the ability to communicate clearly with other members of the profession, actors and directors that was appreciated by all the participants, as Susan, one year out, said, *"...I can communicate with my peers and use whatever you use, vocabulary of sensation, and feeling..." (I.7.AS), and Sophie, "... wouldn't have had any understanding of how a director can work with you..." (I.9.M) without the training.*

Participants also found a more profound admiration for the craft of acting, as Sophie remarked, *"...I now definitely strive to do the best work I can do and I think that comes from having been allowed to push myself to that level (on the course) so I now know that's where all my work should be at least...When I came out I felt like an artist...I felt that I came out with the knowledge and a real sense of being an artist and I think that has strongly affected where I have gone in my career. I am interested in art, not money basically, and I think that is strictly related to what I have learnt (on the course)...It's made me think about acting in a very, very different way. It's made me appreciate it a lot more...it's a lot more complicated than I gave it credit for before..." (I.9.M).*

Ten years out of the course, Elizabeth recounted, *"...I think I found some very strong colours that year...the training was extraordinary for me...it gave me a common language...it gave me everything I needed to be an actor...now I know very clearly where my strengths are and where I need to keep working - it's another thing to do those things - but certainly I feel much clearer about my direction and that only becomes clearer every time you get a job..." (I.10.G), and Roger defined one of the key elements of craft learning, adaptability to*

practical problems, *"...I think we are kidding ourselves...if we think everything is always smooth, things don't run smooth, we always have blips, but it's the recognising of the blip - it's the saying, " actually I can do something better than that. I can try that a different way... rather than repeating the same mistake" I think then you are on a brilliant route..."* (I.11.DW).

The analysis of the data clearly reveals that the participants had learned usable, practical and transferable craft skills on the course, which they could manipulate, continue to develop and which would allow them to communicate effectively with other members of their profession. They also reveal a genuine and profound respect for the knowledge they had acquired and deeply valued. The experience of the participants' learning, which may be defined as one of cognitive apprenticeship, a socially shared form of knowing, accords with Lave's (1993) dynamic socially constructed view of knowledge, which articulates the following features. That knowledge is constantly constructing and transforming as it is used and that it is a part of any activity. That the nature of learning is provisional and that it might be more clearly understood as a cultural and social product, rather than being compartmentalised into 'bodies of knowledge'. The data, as the above quotations from participants suggest, would indicate, as Trowler and Knight (2000) propose, that *"...activities, tasks, functions and understandings are interwoven with the system of relations in which they have meaning, that is they are contextually located..."*. This would indicate that in the learning process, it is not only what is taught and how it is taught that is important to participants, but the complexity of relationships to the lived time, lived place, lived body and lived relationship to others, which must be considered.

### ***Being Connected***

This element illustrates the recollected experiences of the participants

in relationship to themselves-in-the-world, subsequent to their training.

Analysis of the data for this element includes many references to the participants having found, during and subsequent to the course, a new-found confidence and self-assurance. This was an experience which allowed them a sense of freedom, emotionally and physically which they had not previously known. This, they felt, was unequivocally positive for themselves and their relationship to the world, although it might have been a difficult or unsettling time for specific personal relationships. As Susan remarked, discussing her relationship with her long-term partner, *"...I am changing in this way and I am not quite the person that he thought I was anymore and I am very much, 'Well, why can't you change with me? I am embracing this new part of me - it doesn't matter if I am not earning any money, the mortgage will sort itself out, I have got no idea what I am doing next year - I am embracing that, why can't you?'..."* (I.7.AS). This sense of personal security and directness of approach, which Susan related to her ambition, *"...I didn't expect to feel as empowered or as determined...to be as focused or to care about it (acting), as much as I did in the beginning..."* was echoed powerfully by Collette, on the point of leaving the course *"...I just cut away a lot of the faff and have been exceptionally direct with things and I have been more assured of myself...and more grounded...(it has been) one of the most amazing experiences of my life, it's liberating. It's like you have been dead for ten years and suddenly you are alive again..."* (I.3.L), and the experience of feeling more assured was specifically attributed by Martha to her belief in her vocation, *"...I began to see acting as part of the world and story telling as part of religion and tribes and began to see acting everywhere and how it is a small bit of a whole important artistic thing that the world couldn't survive without, especially now. So drama school made me proud that I wanted to tell stories and I wanted to be an actor and I wanted to communicate parts and feelings and truth and also it made me see acting as truth rather than lies..."*

(I.8.M).

The experience of liberation, of experiencing a freedom, was common to all the participants, who expressed it in different ways. Susan's experience was essentially somatic, *"...I catch myself doing things which I just wouldn't have done before...I would be very free physically and I would be uninhibited or unchecked, which is more, "here I am". I am more OK with that bit of me so I don't feel that I have to keep it in check. I am just more comfortable, I guess, with expressing bits of myself..."* (I.7.AS), whereas Sophie talked about finding a psychological freedom in her work, *"...every character that I do that pushes me to a different part of myself I get better, and I think that comes from the places within me that I opened up. I am now not scared of going to those places, so for example a character in a play I am doing is a pimp. He is a really disgusting man and I can now be okay with going to that place in myself that's just really disgusting and sick...I can now go right down into myself and do something disgusting and I think that comes from...knowledge of yourself..."* (I.9M). Martha discovered a form of redemption in the practice of her craft, *"...I am a lot more forgiving of myself because once you study how other people act you realise that you are not so strange...I see what my downfalls are as a human being...Of course you can use all those things in your acting but at the same time it's just a celebration of a human being and who a human being is. How can you ever go and tell stories about characters and human beings and not say that all those flaws and complexities in human beings aren't also beautiful and important? If you see them in other people why shouldn't you see them in yourself? If you can't love yourself then you can't love any one else..."* (I.8.M). But Sophie felt that an existential angst was probably inevitable *"...When I finished my training I did still feel lost but I think that we are always a bit lost and that's what life is and its just you figure out one part of yourself and then something else is lost, so you are working towards something else - so that's maybe just a growing up and understanding, a bit more. In*

*saying that I am much more content now but I have processed a lot more of it now..." (I.9.M).*

Roger also spoke at length about the self-actualisation which had resulted from his experience on the course four years previously, but related it more to the craft skills, professional discipline and cooperative nature of the work which allowed him to *"...feel confident you have got a set of tools that you can unlock things with...I think that's amazing!..." (I.11.DW).* Elizabeth, who completed the training ten years ago and now with two children as well as her career, recalled the rigour and the intensity of her time on the course and the personal honesty she found there, *"...I know I can't live like that everyday, I know you have to have rest moments, but I battle in my life to spend more time talking to people (other than my husband and children) who I feel I can just be honest with and straight with..." (I.10.G).*

The participants, having left the course, recount their experience as a narrative of gaining personal and craft insight, and would appear to see the two areas as aspects of the same phenomena. They may be seen as being in different stages, in Freudian terms, of internalising, or in Vygotskian terms, intrapersonalising, or in Stanislavskian terminology, inhabiting their experience.

The experience of studying the craft skills of acting and the concomitant self-knowledge necessary for an actor may be seen as transforming participants' approach to their self view, so that they re-interpret themselves within a narrative perspective from a state of estrangement and fragmentation before entering the course, to a more sincere and authentic self at the end of the course, connecting up their actions and integrating them, as an actor studying a role, into an integrated whole. The mediating means for this being the psycho-physical techniques and skills, which are based on the discovery, discernment and use of a vocabulary of sensation; a felt and intuited

enactment and intersubjective relationship to one's experience of authenticity, which might be described as a surrender to, or an allowing of, one's full unhindered relationship to one's context. Much as Cain's (1991) A.A. members understand themselves as alcoholics and appropriate the given story structure of the A.A. thereby turning themselves into sobriety, through the vehicle of '*personal stories*', so the participants' openness, confidence and self-acceptance can be understood as their comprehension of themselves as actors, through the means of their particular histrionic sensibility and the mimetic perception of action.

The histrionic sensibility, our ability to mimic action, as Aristotle defined it and as it is used by Francis Fergusson (1949), is a basic element of human consciousness and is the basis of apprenticeship and spiritual learning as may be seen in Zen Buddhism (Watts, 1962; Zukav, 1979), Japanese potters (Singleton, 1989), and the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola (Fleming, 1978). The purpose of the Stanislavskian acting techniques (which are fundamental to the participants' course), are to train the actor to perceive, discriminate and imitate action. In order to accomplish this, the students must learn to free their minds, feelings and imagination from the values and mores of their own historical context and the particular limitations of their own personalities. The participants are attempting to learn a mode of action on many levels which is capable of evoking a mimetic response of the whole being. They must, as far as possible, '*bracket*' themselves, in Husserlian terms, in order to, as Michel Saint-Denis, put it, "*...Become a hand which will fit any glove...*" (Personal communication). The learned techniques, which directly account for well over a third of the student's course and are integrated into all the other aspects of the curriculum, are intended to free the consciousness of the actor and allow her to control it for the purpose of pursuing dramatic action within an imaginative world prescribed by a playwright.



The key Aristotelian notion of 'action' in human consciousness; Stanislavski's understanding of the histrionic sensibility as the transitive imitation of action; the spiritual apprenticeships of the Zen and Christian traditions, where *"...the devout must make present to their feelings and imaginations as well as their reason..."* (Fergusson, 1949); the necessity of apprenticeship craft workers to fully inhabit their craft and individuate their work (Singleton, 1989); Vygotsky and the neo-Vygotskian conception of mediated action in which there is an inter-functional relationship between the individual and their context in the process of identity construction – all suggest that the liberating and freeing consequences of undergoing the course, as experienced by participants, may, in part, be a consequence of their specific learning contexts, and also of the training and honing of the histrionic sensibility and the mimetic perception of action which they are undergoing, thereby allowing them to develop and experience a more complete and developed holistic and connected sense of their being-in-the-world.

### **Summary of Being Out There**

The analysis of the data reveals that participants had learned usable, practical and transferable craft skills on the course, which they could manipulate, continue to develop and which would allow them to communicate effectively with other members of their profession. Participants also revealed a respect for the knowledge they had acquired and deeply valued.

The experience of studying the craft skills of acting and the concomitant self-knowledge necessary for an actor, may be seen as transforming participants' approach to their self-view, so that they re-interpreted themselves from a state of estrangement and fragmentation before entering the course, to a more sincere and authentic self at the end of the course. The liberating and freeing consequences of undergoing the course as experienced by participants

may, in part, be seen as consequence of their specific learning contexts and the training and honing of the histrionic sensibility in terms of action.

#### **5.1.e. Summary of the Major Themes in Relationship to my Research Questions**

My research questions, as defined in 4.1.b, were related to understanding the students' motivations, what sustained them, what the natures of their experiences were and whether they considered the experience to have been worthwhile. The following questions articulated themselves as I pursued my research.

- What factors influenced the students' decision to take this course?
- What was the students' experience of the course?
- What do students believe have been the factors that influenced their experiences?
- How do they feel about their experiences?

I also wished to understand how the researched course might enable students to realise their personal and artistic potential and survive as an integrated person within the highly competitive professional industry for which they are being trained.

The issues that arise from the data in relationship to my research questions suggest that participants' main concerns and pre-occupations, prior to the course, revolved around ideas of life and job satisfaction in relationship to their inner drive to fulfil themselves, of wanting to pursue their Intentional desires which they had suppressed. That this desire, finally erupting, led them to investigate their dream of acting, which they envisioned as a mainly instrumental and technical process and choosing the course on the basis of an inner compunction, rather than any articulated or fully conscious concept of what the

training entailed.

The participants felt that the built environment in which they worked was conducive to their learning process. Relationships between each other and the tutors were creative and disciplined, allowing a 'safe space' for a close working environment which was focused and concentrated, but felt that such relationships and personal work endangered previous relationships outside the course environment. The craft skills and knowledge obtained from the classes were seen by the participants to be tied directly to the practice of their vocation, which was often profoundly and passionately felt by the participants, suggesting they were undergoing rich and deep cognitive and emotional development.

The data analysis suggests that participants saw themselves prior to the training as less developed and less personally fulfilled. However, through the practical process of the work and self-reflection, they begin to actualise aspects of themselves, developing through the course into an enjoyable and fulfilling discovery process.

The experience of studying the craft skills of acting and the concomitant self-knowledge necessary for an actor, may be seen as transforming participants approach to their self-view, so that they re-interpreted themselves from a state of estrangement and fragmentation, before entering the course, to a more sincere and authentic self at the end of the course. The liberating and freeing consequences of undergoing the course, as experienced by the participants may be seen as consequential to their specific learning contexts and the training and honing of the histrionic sensibility in terms of action.

The critical factors identified in this study and emphasised by participants' experiences which created the conditions for this effective

learning environment promoting self-actualisation may be summarised in the following points:

- The creation of a 'safe space'
- Face-to-face relationships with tutors viewed as involved participants in the creative enterprise
- Relationship with peers based on respect, understanding and shared core values
- Ownership and validation of the participants' felt experience
- Non-judgemental acceptance of participants' own felt truth
- Sense of 'transformable' physical space and 'ownership' of physical space
- Critical reflection and articulation of a language of sensation
- Emphasis on collaborative, dialogical learning
- Cooperative, uncompetitive ethos
- Process rather than result orientated learning
- Knowledge acquired by participants seen as relevant
- Learning viewed as holistic incorporating the whole person and their well being
- Firm, equable and fair discipline
- The appreciation and practice of the histrionic sensibility

## **5.2. "From Thanatos To Eros" – An Introduction**

The drama-documentary that follows in *Chapter Six* has been constructed through a process of eidetic analysis, based on the coding themes generated from my interview, documentary and observational evidence and using the actual words of my participants, within what Erlandson (1992) describes as 'critical incidents' (helping to define a typical context). It illustrates a narrative interpretation of the lived reality of the student experience on the course (within the context of my research questions) as discussed in 4.9.g. *The Final Forms of the*

*Two Presentations of Data*, and incorporates, further articulates and contextualises the above presentation and discussion.

The title of *Chapter Six, 'From Thanatos to Eros'*, was inspired by Freud's concept of the instinctual unconscious drive in every human being, towards either life or death, which he discusses in "*Civilization and its Discontents*" (Freud, 1930). The drives he identified, which Trilling (1971; p.155) writes of as "...the ceaseless effort to survive (being) matched in strength by the will to find peace in extinction..."; the drive for unification and oneness in constant tension with an aggressive destructiveness, I have equated with the inertness of the empirical ego and the creative urge of the transcendental ego towards self-actualisation and I have used it as an essence of the nature of the course and the desire of the students. As Picasso is popularly quoted as saying, 'In order to create one must first destroy', and Freud himself uses a 'dramatic' quote, Mephistopheles, from Goethe's 'Faust', "...For everything that comes in being is worthy of destruction..." (Freud, 1930). Freud sees the meaning of the development of civilization itself as being the struggle between Eros and Death, "...between the life drive and the drive for destruction, as it is played out in the human race. This struggle is the essential content of all life; hence, the development of civilization may be simply described as humanity's struggle for existence..." (Freud, 2004; p.74).

In the following screenplay, the struggle of the participants to self-actualise and to challenge and reverse their inner Mephistophelian dictum into a creative and civilising possibility, may be seen to be enacted.

[N.B. Contextual notes for 'From Thanatos to Eros' can be found in Appendix 15]



**Chapter Six:**  
**“From Thanatos To Eros”**  
**[A Drama-Documentary film]**

The following screenplay documents the experiences of a group of post-graduate M.A. students on a one year full time vocational course in acting at a major London drama school





## Scene Summary

1. Registration
2. *"I want to..."* Montage
3. Alice is Late
4. Map of Life - Alice
5. 3D Models - Mia/Tom
6. Dance Session
7. Balcony - Mix
8. *"Where have you come from"*  
- Ola/Tom/Vanessa/Mia/Jovana/Caitlin
9. Object Exercise - Caitlin
10. *"How did you get here"* - Jema/Aiden/Rachel/Alice
11. Lunch Time
12. Winter Break - Ola
13. Winter Break - Tom
14. Winter Break - Jema
15. Winter Break - Mia
16. Screen Acting - Caitlin/Jema/Mia/Gary
17. *"Jema's Day"*
18. Transformation
19. Dance Session
20. Ethnicity/Singing - Gary/Aiden
21. Alexander Technique - Alice/Vanessa/Gary/Mia/Aiden
22. Industry Speakers- Tom/Ola/Aiden/Jovana/Alice/Caitlin
23. Professional Preparation - Ola/Alice/Tom/Gary/Vanessa
24. Filming - Jovana/Aiden/Jema
25. Production - Rachel/Caitlin/Tom
26. Final Show  
- Gary/Jovana/Aiden/Vanessa/Jema/Alice/Mia/Caitlin
27. Endings
28. After Training (1)
29. After Training (2)

### **1. Int. Foyer of the main ArtsEd. building: Day 1.**

We see registration taking place for the academic year. New M.A. students are standing in an untidy line, or groups of two or three. They approach a table set out at the theatre end of the foyer at which, Julia, the young acting school administrator, together with the ArtsEd. Head of Finance, a taciturn, late middle-aged, white haired Scot with twinkling blue eyes, is accepting fees and registering the new year-groups. Those who have been registered are chatting together, or standing alone. A few are looking at the photos of last summer terms productions framed on the walls, others sitting on the foyer seats. Students from the B.A. acting course, familiar with the school and the induction process are greeting each other enthusiastically and noisily. There is an air of expectation, excitement, anticipation and general busy-ness. The Head Caretaker and his Polish assistant trundle through the foyer and out into the courtyard with scores of stacking chairs on a trolley. A member of the academic staff carrying a pile of musical scores walks down the main staircase and is greeted by a couple of musical theatre students, one of whom offers to help carry the scores. His offer is accepted and they pass through the foyer into the corridor, passed the wardrobe and dance studios towards the library and canteen. The volume of animated chatter and the physicality of expression of the experienced recruits contrasts markedly with the muted mumblings and self-consciousness of the thirty M.A. neophytes, used to university beurocracy, but not the apparently more personal, intimate and markedly more physically and emotionally overt relationships on display. Their academic or professional personas are well to the fore, their sophistication and maturity protecting their vulnerability.

Gary is gazing through the glass of a production photo at the reflected images of the other students milling around the foyer. Only the extreme and chronic tension in his shoulders betrays his lack of inner cool. His face is released, his eyes bright and his lips consciously turned into a hint of wry amusement.

GARY: [voiceover (v/o)]

Can't see another black face...This  
is gonna be hard, man, hard...So many  
screaming people...I'm an outsider,

man...This is gonna be hard...Be prepared, man...Do you really want this?...That much?...This is hard, man...

*Tom approaches Aiden who is standing in line waiting to be registered.*

TOM:

Hi, you're Aiden, aren't you? I'm Tom. We were at the same audition in May. *(Smiling broadly and openly)* So, we made it, then?

AIDEN:

Yea, hi, hi...It's a bit much, isn't it?

TOM:

What?

AIDEN:

The noise doesn't stop.

TOM:

*(smiling)*

They're actors, aren't they? It's great isn't it? Really buzzing.

*Jovana is serenely watching the action before her from a foyer chair near the entrance to the Main Theatre.*

JOVANA: *(v/o)*

I feel so naked, so exposed...I can't move a muscle. I'm squirming in my nakedness.

*She is approached by Vanessa, smiling at her.*

VANESSA:

Are you on the M.A. course?

JOVANA:  
(calmly)

Yes thank you.

VANESSA:

I'm a bit mystified as to what's happening. What do we do when we've registered?

JOVANA:  
(calmly)

I'm sure someone will tell us. Everyone seems very friendly. My name's Jovana. I'm from Mumbai.

VANESSA:

Vanessa. From Sydney and I think I'm still jet-lagged.

JOVANA:

Me, also. What did you do in Sydney?

VANESSA:

I'm a vet. Animal doctor.

JOVANA:

A vet? And now you want to be an actor?

VANESSA:

I think so. Only this is all a bit  
frightening. Exciting. My heart's  
thumping.

JOVANA:  
(*smiling*)

It's going to be great.

*Alice, her eyes darting around the foyer, notices Jovana and Vanessa  
and gravitates towards them.*

ALICE: (v/o)

This is my dream of what it would be  
like. Everyone seems so confident,  
so self assured, self-possessed. Will  
I be like them in a year's time?

*Alice approaches Jovana and Vanessa.*

ALICE:  
(*smiling hugely*)

Hi!

*Caitlin arrives into the foyer through the barrier, obviously late and  
peering about her, joins the dwindling queue in front of the  
registration desk, fumbling in her large bag, pulling out an  
assortment of books, make-up, papers, clothes, files, spectacle case,  
plastic containers and sandwiches.*

CAITLIN: (v/o)

I don't have a clue what I'm doing  
here. Why am I here? What do I want  
to be doing this for? I miss Brendan  
and the dogs. This is ridiculous.

What am I looking for in this bloody bag?

*Jema has been talking to a couple of male B.A. students and is walking towards the Main Theatre where the doors are being secured open by a member of the stage management crew.*

JEMA: (v/o)

I hope they liked me...I want a methodology that works for me. I want a methodology that works for me. I want a methodology that works for me...

*The academic staff of the acting school, begin informally to drift down the stairs and make their way towards the main theatre, a few stopping to chat to students, others ensure they are not waylaid. The B.A. students, sensing action, move excitedly into the theatre and the M.A. students, their eyes darting around for clues, follow on, slightly less eagerly, more studiously casual.*

GARY: (v/o)

A couple of token blacks. Well, this is it, man. This is it.

ALICE: (v/o)

Well, this is it, then, this is it.

JOVANA: (v/o)

This is it, Jovana; this is why you're in London.

AIDEN: (v/o)

This is it. Hell. This is it.

VANESSA: (v/o)

I'm here. I'm doing it. I'm here. I'm here.

TOM: (v/o)

We're off then. Waiting's over. Here goes.

CAITLIN: (v/o)

Oh, shit. Where are my glasses?

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

## **2. Montage Sequence: Day 3.**

*M.A. students, some of whom we have seen and heard in the foyer, are seen in a variety of situations, talking on the phone, on the tube, in cafes, walking along London streets; thinking their own thoughts in the bath, washing dishes, putting up posters in their flats, in earnest conversation with each other, or partners, parents, friends, etc...Their unidentified voices float around, above, between and across the images...*

VOICES: (v/o)

...I want to immerse myself in the crafts of acting and to stretch myself into every shape I can to do this. I want to dislocate myself from the constricted academic, thought-driven mould I have been trapped in and remember how to feel free and act on instinct again - I want to re-find my spirit...

...I want to see how far I can push myself. Give myself the chance to do something I have always thought about. I want to become a fuller person...

...I want to discover more about who I am. To break down barriers and insecurities and refine my acting skills...

...I want to become aware of what my body, my voice and my face are capable of and to tap into my emotions and feelings and to develop a more sophisticated understanding of the complexity of individuals...

...I want to be challenged in a safe environment and feel able to take risks and have fun...

...I want to validate my suspicions about wanting to become an actor...

...I want to learn specific techniques of movement, dance and voice...

...I want to achieve a confidence in my own abilities and to understand why I long to do something that I feel I'm not yet good at...



...I want to explore myself thoroughly and push myself to limits that I'm not sure of. I want to experience many different emotions and to find an area that challenges me constantly...

...I want to find my own individuality - to discover how I am comfortable...

...I want to learn how to use my voice more expressively and more confidently and to get to grips with script work...

...I want to have the opportunity to discover things I didn't know about myself and my ability...

...I want a better understanding of how to reveal myself and to inhabit other characters completely and to learn the realities of the acting industry...

...I want to learn how to reach into myself and discover my emotions...

...I want to gain confidence and to feel I have something positive to offer as an actor...

...I want to act more truthfully, to actually learn a craft and to be true to myself...

...I want to be trained professionally and feel I have a future in the acting industry...

...I want to earn the right to call myself an actress...

...I want guidance and support in discovering who I am, what I am capable of and developing anything I have...

...I want to utilise and channel my talents...

...I want to free things up that are stuck...

...I want to grow in confidence...

...I want to have professional training at an accredited drama school and to learn about the industry...

...I want to learn how I can transmit my feelings and spirituality...

*As the montage continues the daylight begins to fade into evening. We see the faces of the students more clearly, they are strained, tired, but their eyes are bright, adrenalin keeping their energy high.*

VOICES: (v/o)

...I'm overwhelmed with excitement -  
I am hungry to learn. Strangely  
enough I realise everyone must fear  
the same as I do, but it's only me  
that can resolve my fear...

...I feel prepared, but apprehensive;  
I'm not sure how it's going to  
feel...

...I feel surrounded by mature and  
serious people, both tutors and  
students alike. Its time to play...

...I feel clearer, less apprehensive  
about the unknown...

...I'm worried about being late...

...So am I...

...Me, too...

...I mustn't let the need to fit in  
and be liked get in the way of being  
myself...

...I feel excited and worried...

...I feel really positive and very comfortable with the other people...

...I'm very tired. I need to close myself in a room and organise my thoughts and all the paperwork...

...I'm worried about what I may find within my thoughts...

...I'm excited and ready to push forward and enjoy the year...

...I'm excited but it's still very much a step into unknown territory...

...I'm reassured by the beliefs, passion and by the layout and approach of the course. Everyone seems lovely and open minded...

...I can't wait to get started...

...I'm a bit shocked that I'm here, but keen to get on and do it...

...I feel inspired and privileged and a little scared...

...I'm a bit overwhelmed...

...I feel excited, eager, motivated and focused...

...I feel relieved that the ice has  
been broken, anxious and curious...

...I'm daunted, thrilled, excited -  
very happy with the group of people

...I'm at the beginning; all the  
choices lie before me. What is my  
life going to be like this year -  
beyond this year...

*The montage ends as the evening light turns to night, the lights dim  
in the buildings and streets. A new moon is rising over London.*

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**3. Exterior. 1.35 p.m. Vestibule. Catholic Centre. Friday. Week 1.**

*Alice is standing by the M.A. notice board in the vestibule, looking  
at a briefing paper which has been pinned up. She is reading the poem  
attached to a few sparse instructions.*

ALICE:  
(reading)

"...Two roads diverged in a yellow  
wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller, long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the  
undergrowth..."

RACHEL:  
(approaching her)

Are you o.k. Alice?

ALICE:  
(near to tears)

There was a hold up on the District Line this morning and I was two minutes late for class, two minutes - and I've been sent home for the day! I know I should 'make allowances' for things going wrong - I'm just so angry with myself - I'm never late for things - and it looks so bad - the first week! And I don't understand what this is (*pointing to the briefing paper*)

RACHEL:

It's the instructions for the "Road Map of your Life so Far".

ALICE:

Oh, the "How did I get here" exercise?

RACHEL:

Yes

ALICE:

I still don't really understand what he wants.

RACHEL:

I'm not sure, either, but I think he wants us to consider our biographies and put them down on paper as if our lives were a map, you know with all

the experiences we have had - like a journey - with destinations and motorways and picnic spots and turning points...

ALICE:

And hold ups - so you are late and get sent home for the day...

RACHEL:

Hmm.

Cut to:

**4. Int. Room 3. Catholic Centre. Week 2.**

*Fifteen students, Group B, are sitting in a circle, the tutor among them. Spread out on the floor is a length of lining paper upon which is drawn what appears at first sight to be a children's map of buried treasure, or something similar. It has roads, swamps, scull and crossbones, signs to the sea, rivers, deserts and arrows pointing in various directions, all drawn, rather well, in coloured pens, with crosses and other symbols. A key to the symbols accompanies the map. Sitting, cross-legged, next to the map, Alice, looking only slightly less delicate than when we last saw her is about to begin her explanation. She is hesitant and her voice hardly carries to the circle of interested faces, willing her on.*

ALICE:

Well, I didn't know where to start, then I just started and it turned out like a pirates map - anyway I was born here (*pointing to woodland*). I've made it a little forest, because that's what it felt like, protected and safe and surrounded by trees. There's a little lane leading to my

first school. That was in the village. I can't remember any cars except my dad's car. He always had music playing in the car - Country and Western music, and it was always warm. He took me to school and I loved it - it was really small, only three classes and attached to the church. I have an elder brother, he had already gone away to big school by the time I started little school. I remember being very happy and mum and dad laughing a lot and we went on picnics. All that was in the woods. Then my dad had a heart attack and everything changed. I've marked a big X in black. That is how I remember it. We stayed in the same house but it felt very different. The leaves had fallen off the trees and it felt bare and cold. My brother changed schools to a school nearer and came home every evening instead of at weekends. He became very dark, silent and withdrawn and had very little to do with me. I remember Mum crying a lot and dad being in hospital for a long time and when he came home he was different, he looked different and was very quiet, he had grown old. Gran came to live with us, mum's mum, which was nice and that made things a bit better, more comfortable, but things were never the same and I can



remember worrying about whether we would have enough money to live on because Dad wasn't working any more and although I still had riding lessons, we had to get rid of my pony - but strangely enough I don't remember being sad about that - I don't know why, maybe being sad about my dad took all the sadness I had. *(She stops and looks down)* Anyway, things went on, as they do. *(She takes a deep breath and continues)* Here is a white cross, that's my confirmation when I was twelve. I had gone to secondary school and I remember being very religious. I wanted to wear a cross all the time and fiercely believed in God. My brother dropped out of uni after the first year and became clinically depressed. My mum became desperately worried about him. Dad was much better now, he had retired early, but his personality had changed, he was quiet, as if the stuffing had been knocked out of him and mum ran the house and finances and everything...Now, here's a big wide road, leading off my secondary school. I was fifteen and studying Shakespeare's "Twelfth Night" for my GCSEs, and it was a revelation. I loved it and I loved my English teacher who was also an actress and working as a supply teacher. She sort

of took me under her wing, and we went to the theatre in Scarborough together and I discovered acting and Shakespeare and drama and theatre and I was in a world I could really relate to. I went into a dream world, I suppose, and cut out what I didn't want to know about. I hung onto my English teacher, she was beautiful and I thought the cleverest most talented person in the whole world and I wanted to be her. I passed my GCSE's easily, joined the drama society, played the lead in "My Fair Lady" in the sixth form collage and thought everything was great. I knew I wanted to act and nothing was going to stop me. I've shown that by this motorway, with three lanes, me in the fast lane. I had my first serious boyfriend; he was in the upper sixth and drove a motorbike. He went on to Uni. when I was in my final year at school and I thought I would join him there the next year. But as you can see *(pointing to a skull and crossbones sign)* that was not to be.

VANESSA:

He met someone else.

ALICE:

No. He had a crash on his motorbike.

VANESSA:

Oh, my God.

*The group has been following Alice's story with rapt attention. They are now mesmerised by the sadness which seems to permeate Alice's life.*

ALICE:

He wasn't killed, but he was horribly injured and was in a coma for two months. I stayed with him and tried to help him get better. I stopped studying, I couldn't think about work or school or uni and just stayed with him. As he got better he went back to his parents, but he couldn't go back to uni. He was all smashed up, one leg was amputated and his internal injuries were very bad. He didn't function properly. And he couldn't really remember everything. He knew his mum and dad and his dog, but he didn't really relate to me. I don't think he remembered who I was. I talked to him about us, but it was like a different person. He didn't really want me around. I thought perhaps he just felt sorry for me and wanted to save me any pain, but now I think he really just found me annoying and in the way. We stopped seeing each other after nearly a year. I had missed my A levels and had left school. I got work nannying

for a friend of the family who had just had twins and lived quite close to us. They were a lovely family and I've drawn a meadow and a lake to represent my time with them. I started riding again and went to the tech. college and took four A-levels. I was living at home and I realised that my brother was quite heavily into drugs. *(There is audible sighing from the group and a few groans of sympathy)* I honestly don't think my parents realised, but I did. I tried to talk to him about it but he was totally cut off, he didn't want to know. We had a huge fight one night when my parents were out for the evening and he accused me of living in a fantasy world and of not seeing what was in front of my face, that I had been completely selfish and had never thought about my family only about myself and that he couldn't carry on any more. The next morning when we woke up he had gone, left home; leaving a note saying he loved us all but couldn't stay any longer. I didn't know how to feel or think - and my mum and dad just accepted it and carried on as if nothing had happened. My brother left home and they just ignored it.

MIA:

How old was he?

ALICE:

Twenty seven or twenty eight. But that's not the point; it was my parents just pretending that nothing had happened. As if he didn't exist. They just accepted it, saying he would be in touch when he wanted to be in touch... *(She contemplates her map, quite angrily)* ...I've drawn a roundabout here and a number of roads off it like a crossroads. I knew I had to make some decisions about my life. Then my Gran died. Suddenly. She wasn't that old. *(Aiden involuntarily snorts as he tries to stifle a nervous laugh. The tutor is also desperately attempting not to laugh at this further tragedy. Oscar Wildes comment regarding the death of little Nell come to mind)* After Gran was buried my parents started to talk about getting a smaller place to live in, possibly in Scarborough, to be close to the sea. I knew I wanted to act, but I felt I should go to Uni. first and applied to study English and Drama. This road leads straight into a swamp. *(The tension releases and a number of students allow themselves to laugh with relief at the tragedy)* Uni was deathly boring. Apart from a couple of tutors and some of the students I met there, the campus,

the course, the atmosphere, was awful. Deadly. By the end of my first year I thought I would leave, but I had joined the drama society and met someone I was interested in and during the summer break we went to Crete together and had the most fantastic few months - the best in my life, I've shown this as a desert with palm trees - it's not a desert, though, but an oasis. *(Laughter of relief from the students and tutor)*

AIDEN:

He doesn't have an accident or die, does he?

ALICE:

No. *(She looks at Aiden, suspiciously, and begins to withdraw)*

AIDEN:

Sorry, I didn't mean that, badly. You've just had some tragedy in your life.

ALICE:

I went back to Uni. for the second year and spent most of my time acting. My parents moved house to Scarborough, which was really weird. Going home to a strange place and staying in the guest bedroom. I sort of moved in with my boyfriend,

really. He was applying for drama school and I started to apply. My final year at uni was great, the work was far more interesting, the professors I had were great and my social life was really good. I've shown this as a tree lined boulevard leading to my audition at ArtsEd, which I've drawn as a big pirate's chest full of gold and jewels and bright possibilities. Then I came here. That's it. That's my life. My story...

TUTOR:

Thank you, Alice. Any questions at all?

AIDEN:

What happened to your brother?

ALICE:

He went to Cambodia. He's still there...I'm not sure what he's doing - exports and imports things, I think...materials. Silk and...stuff. He e-mails my mum, sometimes.

TUTOR:

Any other questions or comments? Directly related to what Alice has said.

*The students look down, or smile, or study their notes. No one appears to want to voice their thoughts in public.*

TUTOR:

O.K. who's next?

*Cut and Fade in to:*

**5. Interior. 3.15 p.m Room 3. Catholic Centre. Week 3.**

*Fifteen students (Group A) are sitting in a three-quarter circle, facing the 'Kitchen' end of the room. The tutor sits among them. One student is standing at the open end of the circle beside a small table, on which stands her three-dimensional model. Behind her on the kitchen bar sits three other models. Two black plastic bags cover a particularly large model which is leaning against the kitchen bar, other models, some in boxes, some unwrapped, but most hidden from view are under the students seats, or behind the seats on top of their bags. The afternoon autumn light is fading, and a standard lamp and a table lamp situated near the kitchen area illuminate the models and the table more than the seated students. The atmosphere is focused; when the student hesitates in her narrative the muffled pulse from the battery clock on the far wall can be heard. Occasionally the sounds of the dance class downstairs, a heavy beat or a soaring rhythm intrude into the thick seriousness of the listening students or the tremulous voice of the present speaker.*

MIA:

*(adjusting the wire legs of her model)*

I wanted to use pipe-cleaners for the legs, because they're furry like mine, but I could only find thick fuse wire. *(The model's legs do the splits)* Whoops, I can't do that.

*A kindly laughter trickles through the students, and Mia catches some of their eyes for the first time.*

MIA:

*(referring back to the model)*



Anyway...I've used wire because I'm very conscious that my legs are so thin. And my feet look enormous; my brother called me Olive Oil after Popeye's girlfriend when I was little and the name stuck, so a lot of my friends from home call me Olive, not Mia. But I don't mind. So I've made the feet out of baby carrots, and drawn the shape of shoes on them with black felt pen...I don't know why I've started with the legs and feet, I'll go up to the top. My head -

TUTOR:  
*(gently interrupting)*

Refer to her by name - it's not you.

MIA:

Sorry. Mia - or Olive's head is made of sponge, because Spongebob Squarepants is her favourite TV programme.

TOM:  
*(quietly)*

Mine too *(A couple of other students giggle or assent to the sentiments)*

MIA:  
*(smiling)*

No, actually it's because I feel, she feels, that I'm like a sponge and I soak everything up. Sometimes I, she,

can't remember what's in there but I love learning about anything and everything. I've sewn on two button eyes and two cloth ears which are also big, because Mia wants to experience everything she can and miss nothing. Also a big mouth because she can tend to talk too much when she gets carried away. Also, she thinks if she talks a lot it will hide her nervousness. *(She pauses)* The body is also made out of sponge, but I've sewn things on to it to cover it up, because I think I'm quite a covered up person. This is a small box and inside is Olive's heart. *(Mia opens a matchbox, covered with material, attached to the model and two pieces of red felt fall out)* You can see the heart's in pieces, but it can probably be put together again. *(She replaces the pieces of felt and her hands shake as she does so. The students are totally engrossed, watching her)* I've used felt because it's easy to cut up but it's quite strong, really...She's wearing a white shawl, the reason for this is - well I had some lace and wanted to use it up *(the students laugh in recognition)*...also it's very feminine and I'm a girl *(the students murmur assent)*...and it stands for my religious beliefs. It reminds me of my confirmation, which was very important at the time and it still is, in some ways...*(she pauses)*

*again) ...I've attached this suede draw-string bag to her tummy, that stands either for her stomach, she can eat a lot - Mia likes food, or for her womb, I want children one day and that's very important too - and suede is such a warm and sensual material. I've given her a skirt made of leaves - I wanted her to be organic and natural, because I feel she is - she loves nature and cares about the environment and looking after the planet...Oh, I forgot to mention these yellow feathers under the box, because I think that her heart rests on something so soft and delicate and like the inside of a bird's nest. And the pearl on the string is for the precious things her parents have given her including the sparkly jewel which represents my sense of fun and laughter in my life...I think that's it...That's Mia...or Olive. (The students tentatively begin to clap but are stopped by the Tutor)*

TUTOR:

Don't clap it's not a performance. We're working. Thank you, Mia. Are there any questions anyone wants to ask Mia, to clarify or enlarge upon anything?

*Unsure what is permissible, the students are hesitant. Mia looks around smiling nervously.*

AIDEN:

You've not given her any hair - was there a reason for that?

MIA:

I haven't, have I? - think I just forgot...*(The students laugh)*...I could have given her wool hair but then she would have looked like a little doll - and I didn't want that - I don't see myself as the doll type. I don't know why I haven't given her hair.

AIDEN:

She's more exposed without hair

MIA:

Yes...

*The pause hangs in the air. No more questions.*

TUTOR:

Thank you Mia. Put her up with the others on the bar. Who's next?

TOM:

Me.

*The tutor nods and Tom rises and moves towards the big model covered by the black plastic bags leaning against the bar. As Mia finishes setting her model and returns to her seat, Tom sets his model against the table. He is enjoying the audience's rapt attention as he removes the plastic rubbish bags to reveal his model, built around a broomstick base with a balloon as the head and a coat hanger armature. It is wearing underpants, a school tie and a huge lipstick grin across*

*its balloon face. Tom receives the response, spontaneous laughter and applause, that he wishes for.*

TOM:

This is Tom. As you can see he is rather tall and thin. Unlike me who is rather short and fat. *(Laughter)* But what I wanted to show was the inner me. And inside I am very tall and slim and good looking. *(More laughter)* I know the model is not very good looking but he thinks he is, which is why he's grinning. *(More laughter)* He is made of wood, in the centre, his backbone, a fine material exhibiting strength and able to withstand the vicissitudes of life.

STUDENT:

What's that?

TOM:

Vicissitudes... mutabilities...  
inconsistencies... *(winking at the student)* ...wobbliness of being in the world. *(Student laughter)* His head is a balloon, it's full of hot air, or it was when I blew it up - I was talking at the time. *(More laughter)* And he's wearing an inane grin which indicates his greatest armour against the world, his sense of humour... *(He stops for a moment, almost caught out by his own wit. The audience picks up his insecurity)* His arms and legs are both made from

coat hanger wire, in other words they're not worth seeing without something covering them, which is why I'm dreading 'Transformation classes'. *(There is a burst of spontaneous laughter from the students)* He's wearing a school tie which indicates his intellectual achievements, of which he is justly proud and underpants which cover his private parts of which he is not so justly proud. *(Hoots of laughter and applause from the students)* You will have noticed Tom is carrying a Marks and Spencer's bag - this contains his ready-made responses to nearly all situations. Good enough quality but not exactly bespoke. His other hand is outstretched, but empty as if grasping for something, so far out of his reach, perhaps never to be attained but yearned for. It is his true self, I think, his self at peace with himself... *(He stops, aware that he has said more than he wanted to say. Perhaps it is the fading outside light, perhaps the excitement, expectation and exhaustion of the day, perhaps the warmth and empathy of the audience, perhaps his own need to be seen, but he has overstepped his own criteria of acceptable public exposure and he suddenly feels naked for the first time during his training. He is very vulnerable and is finding it difficult to continue. The atmosphere in the room is powerful and tense. All can sense his difficulty)* As you can

see, he is not wearing any trousers  
and that's how I feel at the moment.  
Caught with my trousers well and  
truly round my ankles. Thank you  
ladies and gentlemen, that is Tom. (He  
bows and picks up his model and the models  
balloon head falls off. The students cheer  
delightedly)

TUTOR:

Any questions?

*The beat of the dance class increases in volume*

Cut to:

#### **6. Interior. 3.40 p.m. The Large Studio. Catholic Centre.**

*The Dance Class is in session. Group B. are throwing themselves into the final run-through, for today, of a tightly choreographed Jive. The six ceiling speakers produce a wall of volume, the throbbing sexuality of the music, the muscularity of the choreography, combined with the necessary focus of the students; some clearly more experienced at dance, others with natural movement ability and a few desperately attempting to keep up and in time, create a powerfully physical atmosphere. The dance tutor, a masculine and highly disciplined dancer in his fifties, is counting time and dancing ahead of them, watching the group through the full length mirrors that line one wall of the studio. None of the students have worked their bodies so physically, so freely and in such a disciplined way apart from an ex-dancer, who is clearly enjoying the sensuality of the experience; the others, exhilarated but with their stamina only kept alive by the energy of the music and the imagined fear of the tutor's wrath should they give up, are showing various signs of disequilibrium and weakness. The music stops and the tutor wheels round to face them, his arm raised, palm towards them, disallowing any movement or sound. He holds them for a full two, three seconds, before dropping his arm.*

DANCE TUTOR:

O.K. ...That's it. You can go. (He  
turns and walks towards the c.d. player)

*The students, released from his power, move slowly to the sides of the studio to collect their belongings, a dance top discarded earlier, a file and bags. A couple of men, one in his early twenties has sat down where he stopped dancing, needing to regain his wind before moving off the floor, the other, a well built man in his mid thirties is rubbing his calf muscle which is clearly paining him. Any talk in the room is instrumental, regarding the amount of time before the next session, or the physical state of the students. A few students move into the kitchen through the door at the rear of the studio. Most, having collected their things, move out of the studio, up the stairs and re-appear in the balcony above the studio, which they use as their changing area and in which are their personal lockers. They begin to change from their dance gear into day clothes, commenting on their need for showers which don't exist in the building, the enjoyment or difficulty of the dance routine, their physical fitness or stamina, the lack of time before their next session, the horror of the unknown content of the next class, the "3D model" session, or the growing realisation that they are finding very little time to do anything other than their course work. Students from Group A, released from their previous session, begin to join Group B on the balcony, in order to change their clothes for their Dance Class.*

Cut to:

### **7. Interior. 3. 50 p.m. The balcony**

*The clash of atmospheres between the two groups, A and B on the balcony is palpable. Each group's experience of the last hour and a half has been radically different and it will change the dynamics and experience of the next hour and a half.*

STUDENT 1 (GROUP B):  
[to student in group A]

How was it, man?



STUDENT 1 (GROUP A):

Weird...fucking weird.

STUDENT 2 (GROUP B):

How do you mean?

STUDENT 2 (GROUP A):

It's a bit uncomfortable.

STUDENT 1 (GROUP A):

A bit? Fucking exposing - I thought this was supposed to be "a safe space"

STUDENT 3 (GROUP A):

It's something else, man; make your own mind up. We shouldn't say anything. How's dance?

STUDENT 1 (GROUP B):

Awesome.

STUDENT 3 (GROUP B):

Amazing...does your head in, though; and your body.

STUDENT 1 (GROUP A):

So does where we've come from. Good luck.

STUDENT 4 (GROUP B):

Does he get through all of them?

STUDENT 1 (GROUP A):

No. Only about half of us. I'm doing mine next week.

STUDENT 4 (GROUP A):

Anybody seen a pair of character shoes? I left them on top of my locker?

STUDENT 5 (GROUP B).

Come on, its 4 o'clock.

STUDENT 4 (GROUP A)

Oh no, Oh shit. *(Picking up a bottle of water she dashes through the balcony door)*

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**8. Int. The Quiet Room. The Catholic Centre. Friday p.m. Week 3**

*Vanessa and Ola are alone in the quiet room. Ola is filling out an Object Exercise Pro Forma and Vanessa is reading a play script. Ola lays down her pen.*

OLA:

This is so complicated and detailed.  
I've got to rest my brain...

VANESSA:

Did you do any acting in Nigeria,  
Ola?

OLA:

*(laughing loudly)*

No! I couldn't be an actor there. You know, if you want to say you brought up your children properly then you become doctors and engineers and pilots.

VANESSA:

*(smiling easily)*

It's a bit like that in Australia!

OLA:

*(pleased to talk)*

My father was in the military and the military ruled Nigeria for about 40 years, straight after the Colonial War. There was a lot of corruption in Nigeria. He wasn't very accountable, he just did what he wanted and so this attributed to the fact that my dad travelled a lot and in his travels he met my mother... Unfortunately she was very naïve; she fell in love and believed everything he said. She was about 19 when she met my father; 25 when she settled down with him and about 29 when she found out that he had been lying to her. This has a major effect on my life because everything in my upbringing has been geared towards me being excellent; me being great

academically, having a great job so no man would walk all over me!

VANESSA:  
(*laughing*)

My mum says the same thing!

OLA:

My mum pushed me to do well academically and I did. I finished secondary school at 16, and went to university in Nigeria. My mother had enough money for me to go abroad and I wanted to go, but she didn't feel that I would be safe she wanted to be able to monitor me. Anyway, one day my mother said, "How much are tuition fees in England or America, I can afford to send this girl abroad." So she finally made up her mind and said, "OK I am sending you abroad. You are going to go to university and do something proper". "OK, what am I going to do, I don't know what I am going to do, I am not going to do the same thing that I did in Africa which was civil engineering, I am not going to do that! Then one of my cousins said, "Why don't you do computing". "Oh, boring, I don't want to do computing", and he said, "Why not try electronics? There's a lot of maths involved, you like maths don't you"? So I did electronics and at the end of my first year my results was so

good my mum was so happy, 90's - 90%,  
90% every subject.

VANESSA:

Where was this?

OLA:

This was at Kingston University...  
During the holidays I was looking for  
theatre schools and something to do  
in my summer break. We had a house  
in the north of England by the sea  
and I spent all my time visiting  
theatres, trying to get in, but all  
the companies I could find were youth  
theatres or something for children,  
5-11 year olds or 5-18 year olds.  
(*Laughing*) I found one company that was  
prepared to take me on but it was for  
toddlers. They were doing "The Sound  
of Music" and it was fun, you know,  
but it was way too young for me. My  
mum said, "You know, it seems that  
you have a great passion for this,  
why not go to drama school and I will  
pay for you?"

VANESSA:

That was very understanding of her.

OLA:

No, it was very clever of her,  
because by that time I was already  
getting interested in the engineering  
world. I started off my course with 3

girls and about 120 boys, by the end of the first year there was 1 girl and about 80 boys left and I knew the effect that my presence in the room had on people and I enjoyed that and I felt it would be nice being the only girl amongst a group of boys and I enjoyed that for a bit. I thought, "OK, I'll do the engineering and then see what happens after that and if I still want to do acting then I will pursue it". While I was at university I would go to every career fair. I would be looking for any television company (*laughing*) that had an avenue for an engineer to work on a television station and then I thought could go into acting, "There must be a way, there must be a way out, surely there must", I thought, For five years while I was at Kingston I did everything in my power. I would talk to people, my careers advisor said, "Why the hell are you doing engineering". (*Laughs*) I was like; "Maybe I want to work in television, I don't know I am just doing it, it's not going to go to waste" ...Then I heard about 'extras' agencies...

VANESSA:

Walk on parts?

OLA:  
(nodding)

I never knew about those until a few friends, said, "Why don't you do this"? They gave me a few numbers; I called up a few agencies. In the first year I think I only ever got called once... *(Laughs)*...the second year I got called a lot of times and then it sort of went up and down depending on what work they had. Shortly after I graduated from university, I got a job in a communications company and so that was it, I had finished school, I went straight into work I had bills to pay, I had to set up home and through that I got my permanent residency in the UK.

VANESSA:

So how did you finally get to drama school?

OLA:  
(her eyes filling with tears)

I was involved with a guy who I absolutely adored but who turned out not to be the right person for me and he lied a lot and when I found out that he was lying and I couldn't take it anymore, I said I was going to leave, which he didn't take to kindly and in the process he hit me a lot...

*(Her voice slows down)*...My life just collapsed, I couldn't understand how somebody I had known so well had turned against me. I lost my job because I stopped going in to work gradually, because every time I went in I was so tearful. Many times I didn't want to leave the house, I was so scared. My self-confidence went...

VANESSA:

*(visibly affected by what she is hearing)*

Ola, that's terrible...

OLA:

I thought it was weak people who got abused. I felt that if I opened my mouth to tell anybody they would blame me and say I was blind...  
*(Raises voice)* "Couldn't you see he was lying? Couldn't you see he was doing this? You must have been stupid"! So I didn't tell people and the more I didn't say anything the worse it got...My mum was always concerned, "Why aren't you working? Why aren't you doing this"? But she would never push, she would just call me. But she never gave up and one day she said "Why don't you come to Nigeria? I will pay for it". So I went to Nigeria to visit my mother and she didn't ask questions, she just loved me and took care of me and she said,



"You can become anything you want, anything." It was then that I started to think maybe I can - but how? You know the only thing I ever really wanted to be was an actor...Anyway, I came back to England and I went to the Job Centre and I said, "I want to be an actor and I don't know what to do", and they said "Well we don't know," and I said "Well you are the Job Centre, I want to work, help me find work." and they had this very dedicated team who help you find work and they started phoning round theatres and trying to find me work and all they kept saying was, "Has she got drama training? Has she got drama training?"...

VANESSA:

What an extraordinary story!

OLA:

*(laughing)*

I had never heard of the Conference of Drama Schools! I heard of the City Lit through the Job Centre. They told me, "You know you could get cheap tuition here." So I went to the City Lit and I thought, "I'll do that and maybe I can become an actor and get the training". But this wasn't enough, I wasn't on a par with the people in the industry and I realised

what I had to do was to go to drama school and so I started to pursue that...

*The door opens and Tom enters.*

TOM:  
*(breaking the confidential atmosphere)*

Ola, you are being looked for. You're late for your Voice tute.

*Ola silently leaves the room.*

TOM:  
  
Did I say something wrong?

VANESSA:  
  
Ola got a bit emotional talking about her life before coming here. Were you really in Hollywood, Tom?

TOM:  
  
I was.

VANESSA:  
  
How come?

TOM:  
  
Are you really interested?

VANESSA:  
  
Yes, really!

TOM:

Good...I was studying law at Manchester - L.A. was a place that had always intrigued me and I really wanted to go. I was technically a student, having completed my degree but not my barristers training, and I was entitled to a student visa, so I thought, why not?

VANESSA:

And was that because Hollywood was there?

TOM:

*(happy to chat)*

I have always been fascinated with films since my early teens, so I wanted to go and get a feel for the place. I got the travelling bug before I went to uni, and I thought I would like to go out and travel a bit more. I wasn't happy there for the first few weeks but once I got to know the city I enjoyed the place; met great people and found out quite a bit about what acting is like out there.

VANESSA:

What were you doing?

TOM:

I was doing telesales with a bunch of other actors which was great fun...It was the best time I had in my life. I went and auditioned with an agency on Hollywood Boulevard (*laughing*) with the worst American accent but got in with that agency. I found that most of the work they were finding was just extras stuff, not even small parts or anything. Then as luck would have it, the buses in L.A. went on strike for two months and I had no other means of transport. In L.A. you have to have a car if you want to move around, so acting-wise it dried up. All I really learned from LA is what the courses are like. Also just hanging around with lots of other actors from other parts of the world and meeting them and finding out what they were up to was a great experience and then in New York I actually sat in on some classes there.

VANESSA:

You went from L.A. to New York?

TOM:

I spent my last month in New York and went to the New York Film Academy and sat in on a couple of classes to see what it was about. I think that gave

me even more hunger, so when I got back I was racing to get to drama school but it wasn't realistic with my debts, so I had to get the money first. I started looking on the internet for amateur dramatics; it was just a gradual thing, to gain confidence and to meet like minded people. Obviously it varied, the standard of people, but it was great for me because I could speak to the guy who led the classes who'd been trained, also the director had been trained, so I could speak with them about people's reputation and drama schools and it was very helpful for me to have a stepping stone between no experience and drama school, so a part of me was getting comfortable in knowing that I was going in the right direction. In the meantime I was working.

VANESSA:

So you weren't completing your barrister's year?

TOM:

No...At first I was thinking I could become a legal clerk. But I started working for Vodaphone through my best friend who worked for them and it just became one of those things where you were locked into a job, which is

all the more reason why I am glad I didn't do the law, because once you are in any job its hard to get out so...

VANESSA:

So what happened?

TOM:

I had found audition pieces I was happy with and I applied to schools that I could afford and started to audition. *(Laughing)* My first was horrendous.

VANESSA:

Where was that?

TOM:

Birmingham. I think I may have smacked of desperation! I took the time off work and I think I overworked my audition speeches and they had become really stale because I had just worked too much on them and lost sort of interest and the funny thing is that I had a few auditions where I had a couple of call backs but I didn't get in. There was a big gap between them and my ArtsEd audition where I pretty much just left my pieces alone...I think it really helped to have that break away from them...also to take the

edge off my thinking that it's not the end of the world.

VANESSA:

It feels like it at the time, though, doesn't it?

TOM:

*(nods)*

You come to a cross roads, don't you? I didn't want to be fifty and sat behind a desk thinking *(imitating Marlon Brando)* "I could have been a contender".

VANESSA:

*(smiling)*

I got quite desperate, I hated my life, and I just couldn't stand being a vet anymore.

TOM:

In Australia?

VANESSA:

Anywhere!

TOM:

Even though you had trained for seven years?

VANESSA:

I always wanted to be an actor but had to take the more practical route through school, so I was always

studying very hard at school and then studying exceptionally hard at uni...There was always something getting in the way of doing acting although it was what I really wanted to do. It was pretty much halfway through university I took a year off and found out that I just didn't want to do that any more and I really wanted to do acting. I went back and finished my final year and then literally came straight to England with the idea of working as a vet and then working my way into acting...But at this stage I was quite desperate. I couldn't stand being a vet anymore. *(Sighs)* I graduated from university and I had to start working straight away if I was going to have any kind of career being a vet. *(Smiling)* I still have this practical level in me to keep being a vet no matter how much I am sick of it because it's something I can always do to keep me alive and so I knew I had to work. If I didn't I would lose that experience and I would be quite unemployable...

TOM:

I know what you mean.

VANESSA:

So I came to England...The first ten months in the vet job I had was a



horrific experience where I was just working insane hours. I didn't have time to do anything else except for work...Then I struck a deal with the employers that at the end of that year I would start doing a part time evening course at drama school. Then the next year I did a round of auditions.

TOM:

Why did you train as a vet in the first place?

VANESSA:

When I started I was really happy to be doing it and it was halfway through...something was wrong. I was getting really depressed. I had quite a severe depression actually and something was going wrong. I was really angry, really upset, so then I made a decision...I went to a conference and heard about doing research projects. So I decided to do a research project and take a year off and at the time it was a really big decision because it meant changing everything I thought my life would be for the past ten years...I had this thing I would go to school, go to university, be a vet and that's it. So it was a really big decision at the time. I went to Vienna for a

year and by the time I got out of that vet environment and doing the research project I actually thought, "I don't like doing vet", and it was a really hard thing to say because when you are in the vet environment you have to be obsessive about being a vet and you have to love it, because it was so hard to get in. To say you didn't like it was a dirty word and so you had to keep on going and when I finally admitted it, "I don't like this I don't want to do this anymore," people were really shocked because I could say that...

*The door opens and Mia, enters in floods of tears.*

VANESSA:

What is it, Mia?

MIA:

*(shaking her head)*

Nothing...Oh! I don't know...I just feel so exposed...so horrible...I didn't think it would be like this...nowhere to hide...I feel awful...

VANESSA:

What's happened?

MIA:

Its voice...It's just feels so emotional...I feel so attacked...

*She huddles into a chair, staring out of the window. Tom walks to the door.*

TOM:

I'll see you later.

*He leaves quietly. Mia quietens down and Vanessa leaves her to recover her composure, handing her a tissue.*

VANESSA:

If it's making you so unhappy,  
Mia...you don't have to be here, you  
know...if it's not the right place  
for you...

MIA:

*(blowing her nose on the tissue)*

I wasn't expecting to get in. I was  
going to reapply and do some work  
beforehand...Before I went to  
university I had auditioned at  
different drama schools but I wasn't  
ready in myself to go to drama  
school. I quite wanted to get a  
degree.

VANESSA:

Were you accepted for any drama  
schools?

MIA:

Yea, East 15. But I didn't like the  
atmosphere there. It wasn't for me  
and I wasn't ready to go into that  
kind of regime and training. And then

when I was in my final year at university I tried straight away to get into drama school and I got in. University is so different from drama school. In drama school you have to be 100% dedicated, whereas university is a lot more lenient. I felt that I wanted to find myself I wanted to find out more about myself before I went and did it. I wanted to make 100% sure because I was giving up a lot of benefits in life by choosing this path. I did a degree in drama and the whole time it frustrated me very much because I wanted to learn more about acting rather than plays and the things that go on behind the scenes...

*The door opens and Gary comes into the room. He senses the delicate atmosphere and nodding, goes over to the bookcase and begins to search through the books.*

VANESSA:

*(attempting to lighten the tension in the room)*

You came here straight after university, didn't you, Gary?

GARY:

*(without turning around)*

Yep. Straight from the place of learning...I did my degree in history and politics and I enjoyed it, but I didn't want to continue with anything

in that vein at all...Drama was what I wanted to do before Uni as well.

MIA:

*(recovering her self composure)*

Why did you decide to do a degree beforehand?

GARY:

*(turning to face the women)*

Because I knew even when I was as young, like 18, I knew that drama was risky and it would be good to have a back up and I wanted the university experience as well...rather than just a drama school experience. I wanted the whole Uni life and have a normal degree.

MIA:

Did you consider going straight into the profession without training?

GARY:

*(shrugging)*

I could have tried because I had an agent up North, but they are not that good...so I wasn't very hopeful that I would get much acting work and I wouldn't have come to London. It would have been up North...

*Jovana and Caitlin comes into the room and look around*

JOVANA:

Hi guys. Have you finished for the day?

VANESSA:

I've got an Alex. Tech class for half an hour, then I've finished...

JOVANA:

We're going downstairs to the bar...it's much cheaper than going to the pub.

VANESSA:

Yes, I know, it's quieter too, apart from the constant horse racing on the telly...We were talking about Uni and drama school...You worked for quite a long time before deciding to train, didn't you, Jovana?

JOVANA:

*(perching on the side of a chair)*

Yes, but I had been toying with the idea of training ever since I finished college, but my parents were quite against that and I guess my drive was not that strong at nineteen. I wanted to experiment with alcohol and sex. *(Gary lets out a delighted laugh)* But acting...well, if that was going to be blocked, there were so many other things that needed to be experimented with in life. At

that point I said, "OK I will explore every other avenue that I think is open for me that I think I can make into a profession and see how that goes and if nothing works then I will go back to acting".

MIA:

And...?

JOVANA:

When I turned 25, I realised that if I don't start doing what I want to do, I am never going to do it. There was no inner core, just this outer core that was holding everything together so really my toughest decision was at 25 when I said I am not doing this anymore and I am going back to acting. I saw a play called "Molly Sweeny" which is amazing, and it made me cry and I hadn't cried for so long...I needed something to connect to and there was the connection and I stopped doing all of my various jobs. That was the point when I did a year of professional acting in Mumbai, which was excellent. I think I was causing myself a lot of mental problems by doing something I didn't want to do, I think there was a lot of "splits" starting happening, I went for psychiatric help, for depression. All

of this was the effect of doing something I didn't want to do. *(She turns to Caitlin, who has sat down and taken an interest in the conversation)* Have you always wanted to act, Caitlin?

CAITLIN:

*(delighted to be asked)*

I always knew that I wanted to be a story teller; rather than an actor. I loved telling stories and expressing things in songs and words all my life, and I just took it as given that I would eventually do it - but I am not exactly one to correlate what goes on in my head and actually do it...*(All three women laugh)* So it took me a long time to actually go for it, particularly because I came from a small town on the west coast of Ireland and I had a constant fear of big cities and that kind of thing and I had learned from other people that it required training and that you couldn't go anywhere without training...So I was curious about this training because everybody was saying that I needed this training but nobody seemed able to tell me what exactly happened in this training...All I knew was that any actors that I respected and admired, had trained and I knew that if I wanted to be where they were and if I



wanted to meet them and be able to discuss the craft of acting with them, just for my own confidence and self esteem, I wanted to be able to have done what they did, even if I decided at the end of it that it was all a load of rubbish (*Laughter*) ...I also went a bit of a rigmarole route in that I did an MA in drama and theatre studies, which kind of whetted the appetite, but it wasn't acting specifically.

MIA:

You didn't think about training rather than going to Uni?

CAITLIN:

I did, but I was 18 and I think I did apply for a drama studies before my leaving certificate. But the way it is structured in Ireland, you have got a huge exam at the end, and the audition, I think, was during that exam and I broke up with the love of my life at that time, and as a result I didn't go to the audition and it kind of left a bad taste in my mouth...But in hindsight, there was a whole load of personal things going on...my parents didn't support it, they wouldn't even drive me up to Dublin for the audition! They thought it was ridiculous, even though they

had said you can do whatever you want in your life...It was really 'as long as that university degree wasn't acting!' *(More laughter)* So the support wasn't there and I was very shy about acting as well...I loved it so much, but I never told anybody because it was all seen as being something kind of excessive or something that wasn't necessary... *(Laughing)*

JOVANA:

I'm sure most people think that...

CAITLIN:

We went to this school trip around to nursing homes when I was in the 5<sup>th</sup> year which would be at the age of 16 or 17 and we sang for the old people in the nursing homes...The nurse asked us what we wanted to do with our lives and for the first time in my life I was actually truthful and told somebody that, yes, even though I was from the west coast of Ireland, I did in fact want to be an actor! ...This was the first time I had actually said it. There were a few of friends around and she looked at me as if I was strange *(laughing)* and said, "Would you not want to do nursing or something?" I didn't tell anybody after that and I just left it... *(Laughter)* But then I did my

English, I loved English anyway, because English is storytelling and I loved writing. So I did an English degree and got parts in loads of productions, which was brilliant, which kind of upped my confidence as well, as I hadn't done any acting, besides in the living room (*laughing*) and that wasn't much of an opportunity! (*More laughter from the other women*)...How do you know it's going to be the right thing for you if you haven't done it? (*The women nod in understanding*) You just have an instinct, you know and you think you are crazy. (*More vigorous nodding*)...I didn't even know the difference between regular theatre and musical theatre; I didn't know the difference between a drama and theatre degree and an acting degree. Nobody seemed available to tell me and the guidance counsellor thought I was crazy...So I did the MA in drama and theatre studies...I travelled a little bit and I tried to put the acting out of my mind, because the MA in drama and theatre studies was also quite tough and I thought I needed a break...I just thought I didn't have the tenacity to cope with the let-downs, the auditions; I wouldn't be able to cope with the competition and stuff, so I went teaching for a year...I had

a fantastic year, taught 30 amazing children and that changed me in lots of ways and I decided that this is something that I could do that could be wonderful for the world...It could be great...I am actually very good at it...I was in a couple of plays, in my home town, with the amateur dramatics...(She stops and looks at the other women) Sure, should we not continue this in the bar downstairs...?

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**9. Interior. 9.20 a.m. Room 3. Catholic Centre. Week 6.**

*Group B are sitting in a line, the chairs slightly curved round the edges of the room to accommodate the 15 students and the tutor in one row, facing the kitchen end. The chairs start a few feet behind the main door, leaving a "large room" sized acting area between the chairs and the kitchen area. The tutor sits in the middle of the students. He has a small low table in front of him, on which is a stop watch, a note file, a filled-in pro forma and a pen. A candle is burning in a small glass holder on the table. The window blinds are drawn and the only light, apart from the candle, comes from the narrow strip window which runs horizontally along the top of the wall behind the kitchen area. There is enough light in the room to see the action within the acting area where a bedroom has been set up. A double bed, fully made up, is set toward the centre of the room, with a chair next to it. A chest of drawers is set to the side of the room, and a full length standing mirror is placed near the drawers. A costume rail is set on the other side of the room. There is a blue rug on the floor, and a standard lamp near the kitchen counter. Personal objects give the room a specific context, a few books on the chair and chest of drawers, clothes on the rail, a belt and a scarf hung over the mirror. The seated students and the tutor are silent, watching Caitlin put the*

*finishing touches to the room. She places a cushion at the bottom of the bed, sweeps her eyes over the rest of the room, and comes and sits in a chair which is placed directly in front of the tutor desk.*

CAITLIN:

That's it. *(She smiles nervously, looking at the tutor)*

TUTOR:

*(referring to the pro-forma in front of him)*

So this is a sleeping partner exercise? *(Caitlin nods)* What is your Action?

CAITLIN:

To get ready for bed without waking my boyfriend.

TUTOR:

To get ready for bed?

CAITLIN:

And to get into bed.

TUTOR:

So what is your action, specifically?

CAITLIN:

To go to bed without waking my boyfriend.

TUTOR:

*(nodding)*

Your partner's action?

CAITLIN:

To sleep.

TUTOR:

What's the nature of your relationship?

CAITLIN:

He's my boyfriend.

TUTOR:

That's a label, not a relationship - what's the nature of the relationship? - Close? Intimate? Loving? Fraught? Difficult? One-sided?

CAITLIN:

Caring, close, intimate.

TUTOR:

Your objective?

CAITLIN:

To save my relationship.

TUTOR:

Image of your objective being fulfilled? You don't need to say what it is.

CAITLIN:

It's on the form - my boyfriend leaning over to hug me happily in the morning.

TUTOR:

Your obstacle?

CAITLIN:

A sleeping partner who must not be woken up - my boyfriend.

TUTOR:

What are your Given Circumstances?

CAITLIN:

Right...It's Dublin in September. We are staying in my boyfriend's one-bed roomed studio flat and it's the night before my boyfriend's driving test. The plan had been to stay in and distract him from worrying about his test by watching a DVD and having a meal. However my sister rang asking me to go into town and my boyfriend reluctantly agreed that I should meet her for a quick drink as she was hoping to meet her ex-boyfriend who is in town and she wanted the company. I left him at half eight this evening. It's now four ten in the morning. In the pub I ran into an ex-boyfriend who I had not seen in a few years and we spent all evening

together. We ended up going to a night club together, dancing and talking for ages. I got a missed call on my phone at half eleven from my boyfriend saying he was going to bed and was leaving the key out for me. If my boyfriend wakes up he will know what time it is and conclude that I don't care about him or his driving test and will wonder who I would have been out with on a week night until half four in the morning. I have let him down before and it's caused problems. I really don't want to be found out. That's it.

TUTOR:

O.K. Good. What are your activities?

CAITLIN:

I've got to change out of my clothes that smell of the club, into my bedclothes, brush my teeth to get rid of the smell of cigarettes and alcohol, take off my make up which I put on heavily for the nightclub, and get into bed without waking him up.

TUTOR:

What's at stake?

CAITLIN:

My relationship with my boyfriend and my happiness - my relationship.



TUTOR:

Why must you do it now?

CAITLIN:

I need to get into bed as soon as possible. If he wakes up and sees me it will be awful.

TUTOR:

What's your preparation?

CAITLIN:

I'm going to get dressed into what I would go out for the evening in, put on heavy make up...Smell cigarettes and some alcohol and to smell some cheap aftershave of an old college flame. I'm going to listen to some club music. Imaginative preparation is to think about my boyfriend's test and his heartbroken face if he found out and woke up. Oh, and the bathroom sink is blocked up so I have to clean my teeth in the kitchen. My tee shirt is under my pillow.

TUTOR:

O.K. have you got everything you need? - Who's your partner?

CAITLIN:

Gary.

TUTOR:

O.K. Off you go. Take your time.

*Caitlin stands up and moves over to the door, picks up a bag containing clothes, and shoes, and a furry jacket and leaves the room. The students and the tutor remain silent and still. One student is writing notes in an A4 folder; another has his eyes almost closed. The others are attentive and focused. After about a minute Gary enters the room through the far door, walks to the bed, sits on it and strips to his underpants and tee shirt. He slips into bed, leaving his clothes on the floor and lies on his side, pulling up the duvet.*

TUTOR:

Do you have a poem or speech to  
concentrate on, Gary?

GARY:

*(from under the duvet)*

Yep.

*Vanessa giggles quietly, which sets off Mia.*

TUTOR:

*(quietly, shaking his head)*

Ssh. Let him focus.

*The two girls immediately stop and silence returns to the room, a thick focused silence, unforced and communal. The toilet down the corridor is heard flushing and the sound of "club music" is just audible, issuing from the same place. Five minutes pass in this silence. The tutor occasionally looks at the pro forma in front of him and Vanessa takes out a folder from her bag under her chair and looks through some notes. She then begins to write, occasionally pausing to think. Gary turns in the bed and a foot appears at the bottom of the duvet. One of the students smiles and looks down. The quality of the silence begins to change to a delicately expectant quietness. The church bell from the tower almost opposite the Centre across the road chimes the half hour, clear and sharp. An emergency vehicle, its alarm*

sounding, whines down the High Street, a few hundred yards away. The handle of the door turns almost imperceptibly both to sound and sight, but most of the students are already aware of its movement or the tiny scraping sound, within a moment everyone's gaze is at the door. The handle of the door continues to turn and the door is freed from its catch. It is gently pulled back with its catch held. The hinges begin to "click-click" and immediately the pressure on the door eases. The pull begins again, the click-click quieter this time, then stopping as the door passes a sticking point. Gradually the door opening widens and the seated student's eyes dart from the door to the bed and back to the door. Caitlin's face, eyes darkened with heavy makeup and concentrated attention appear at the opening and focus on the form under the duvet. It doesn't stir and Caitlin edges her way through the door and into the room, holding the door with her right hand and delicately placing her shoes and her handbag, which she is holding in her left hand, on the floor. She turns to the door and almost wills it to close silently. It appears to do so until at the last moment the hinge sticks and the "click-click", seemingly, to everyone in the room except the figure under the duvet, sounds like an explosion of sound. Caitlin freezes, then slowly turns towards the bed. The body is still. No movement, no sound, even his breathing inaudible. Caitlin's breath, however, is audible, both to herself and the onlookers - short, sharp intakes of air. She opens her mouth in an attempt to quell the sound as she picks up her handbag, leaving her shoes where they lie, and slowly begins to move toward the costume rail, keeping as far away from the bed as possible, her eyes and attention keenly aware of the sleeping figure. The onlookers are with her, willing her to succeed, their breathing almost matching Caitlin's. By the time she reaches the costume rail Caitlin's confidence is beginning to grow. Her thought process is clearly visible. She places her handbag on the floor and with her eyes on the bed; she carefully slips her furry jacket from her shoulders and holds it while reaching for a wire coat hanger. As she lifts the hanger from the rail it hits against another hanger and the sharp metallic reverberation slices into the silence. Caitlin freezes her eyes squeezed shut. All other eyes are on the bed as Gary turns over and sighs. He draws the duvet more closely around him. It is a warning. He responds to sound. Caitlin remains fixed, her eyes clamped together. Her ears almost throbbing with the effort of listening. Gradually she opens her eyes and begins to move again. She doesn't attempt to hang up her jacket but places it with extreme delicacy on the floor, avoiding any sound. Her confidence returning

she begins to undo the side zip on her skirt but the sharp tic-tic-tic-tic of the zip forces her to stop and take stock before the sound disturbs the sleeping figure. She attempts to slip the skirt over her hips but without success and the "sh sh sh sh" of the material is as potentially disturbing as the noise of the zip. She returns to the zip method, but this time her tempo is far slower, the noise hardly audible, and she covers each movement of the zip through its length with her fingers, to absorb the metallic sound. Her skirt is now loose enough to be eased over her hips and with the control of a dancer she steps out of the skirt and allows it to fold itself on top of her furry jacket. Her ears now have a heightened awareness to the "amplified" sounds of her clothes as she hooks her thumbs under her tights and with a gentle, sustained and well controlled movement eases one leg, then the other out of her tights with hardly a falter. She leaves the tights on the floor and begins to move slowly towards the bed. Her ankle cracks loudly and she stops as Gary sighs and pulls the duvet around him further. His leg is exposed to the knee and Caitlin stares at it. She starts to move again, this time aware that her body is full of noises. She reaches "her" side of the bed and attempts to lift one side of her pillow to release her Tee shirt but Gary, his face turned away from her on the far side of the bed, is breathing heavily and she decides on a different course of action. She moves slowly away from the bed and into the kitchen area. As she steps into the kitchen, past the counter, she brings her hand up to her mouth and clenches her fist. She turns and moves out of the kitchen and tiptoes past the bed. The onlookers are aware of what she has done and are feeling for her. She is attempting to move more quickly but as she does so her foot hits the floor and slides. Her inner tempo is now very quick but she controls herself and reaches her handbag, which she has left with her clothes, almost without any further sound. Lifting her handbag and holding it away from her body she returns towards the kitchen, this time with more speed and control. Arriving in the kitchen, with a counter between her and the bed, her confidence grows again as she takes out a mirror and tissues from her bag. Making very little noise she takes a jar, which she had set earlier, from near the sink and begins to remove her make-up. Her focus is now on herself rather than on the body in the bed and she skilfully and rapidly cleanses her face, a clearly habitual action, which she achieves economically, successfully and quietly. She has now achieved two of her activities and has yet to clean her teeth and negotiate getting into bed. She picks up her toothbrush and toothpaste tube which she

had set near the sink and spreads the paste onto the brush. Looking at the tap she decides not to risk running the water, but gently taps the spout holding her toothbrush under it. Nothing happens. She begins to slowly clean her teeth with the dry toothbrush, very slowly, with her mouth tightly closed to avoid any sound. As she does so her eyes are fixed on the bed. Finishing cleaning her teeth, she puts her head into the sink to empty her mouth and sees a glass filled with water by the side of the bowl which she had also set earlier. Obviously relieved, she picks up the glass, rinses her mouth and spits into the sink. The water hits the bottom of the metal bowl with a loud hollow noise and Gary, clearly disturbed, sighs heavily, moans and turns over, but does not "wake up". Caitlin has ducked below the kitchen counter, out of sight. The tutor rubs his hand across his brow and shakes his head and one of the students issues a low "phew". The tension in the room, among the watching students is high. The church tower bell strikes the three quarter hour, but it has no effect on the occupant of the bed. Caitlin's head appears over the edge of the counter. She stands up and realising she is still "safe" replaces her toothbrush by the side of the sink. She begins her journey back to the side of the bed. The shock of the "spitting" has locked her into a further stage of focus and she reaches the bed soundlessly. Gary is now lying well away from Caitlin's side of the bed and she is able to lift the pillow and get at her Tee shirt with surprisingly little problem. She moves away from the bed before putting the Tee-shirt over her head and slipping her arms through. She realises she is wearing it back to front, but leaves it and moves towards the bed. Reaching the side of the bed she pushes the duvet slightly away from her and placing one hand on the bed lowers her body until it is level with the mattress. She places her other hand on the floor and lifts her leg onto the bed. Her body follows. She stops. One leg is still on the floor but one leg and part of her body is in the bed. Gary has not stirred. She lets her head rest on the pillow and gently eases her body further into the bed. Gary moves. She stops. He stops. Slowly, snake-like, her leg disappears into the bed under the duvet. She closes her eyes...Silence.

TUTOR:

Thank you. Hold it there.

*The students watching release their tension by coughing and moving in their seats and nodding to each other, but no one speak. Gary sits up in bed and looks at Caitlin who is looking at him.*

GARY:

Hi, baby.

*There is a little laughter from the onlookers and Caitlin, clearly having undergone an experience climbs out of bed.*

CAITLIN:

Thanks, Gary. *(She puts on her skirt and comes over to sit opposite the tutor)*

TUTOR:

How was that?

CAITLIN:

I thought I was going to die when I spat in the sink. I was sure he was going to wake up - I don't know what happened - I just did it automatically. And the noise it made - Oh my God!

*Laughter from the students and agreement.*

TUTOR:

Let's start at the beginning - how was your preparation?

CAITLIN:

It was good. I went into the toilet and changed into clothes I would only ever wear to go out in the evening. My furry jacket is, well how

ridiculous is that? *(Student laughter)* I wouldn't be wearing that for school, now, would I? That immediately helped me to feel like it was the evening and when I put my going out makeup on I felt really good. I played some club music which I haven't heard since I was last out clubbing which was over a year ago - so that brought back immediate pictures of Dublin and Saturday evenings! I lit a cigarette, stubbed it out and smelled it and sniffed some whiskey at the same time. That was horrible, but it worked. I know that smell! *(More laughter)* Especially with the aftershave, it nearly made me puke - so I was ready to come in quite soon.

TUTOR:

What about your boyfriends driving test? Could you accept that quite happily?

CAITLIN:

Oh my God! I forgot all about that - I was just thinking I had been out all night with an old flame and I needed to get into bed before he woke up - I didn't think about his driving test! I'm so selfish! *(More laughter)*

TUTOR:

You felt prepared to enter the room;  
you felt focused and knew what you  
wanted?

CAITLIN:

Yes.

TUTOR:

And how was coming in - could you  
keep your focus?

CAITLIN:

Yes, I didn't have a chance to become  
self-conscious because the door was  
so difficult to open.

TUTOR:

So your bridging action to avoid the  
shock of entering the space became  
the opening of the door?

CAITLIN:

I had to concentrate completely with  
that awful clicking sound - I never  
realised it was so loud! And I had my  
bag and my shoes. I took my shoes off  
before I came in. I wasn't going to  
and then I thought, "What on earth am  
I doing keeping my shoes on in the  
flat? Take them off before you go in.



TUTOR:

Good, good, a clear immediate previous circumstance...So you are now inside the room. What was your thought process?

CAITLIN:

When I came in? *(The tutor nods)* I was just really aware of my own breathing, I was so worried about waking him up and I couldn't seem to control my breathing - all I could hear was my own breath - so I wanted to keep as far away from the bed as possible

TUTOR:

When you were preparing this at home, were you aware that you might feel like this?

CAITLIN;

No, no, it's completely different. I mean, I did things in the same order as I had thought about it at home, and in my preparation, like practising getting into bed quietly, but no it was nothing like the same experience. It was so real when I did it here.

TUTOR:

It felt truthful, here?

CAITLIN:

Yes, completely.

TUTOR:

What do you mean by that?

CAITLIN:

I felt completely involved, I was just doing it. Completely naturally.

TUTOR:

You had a free thought process.

CAITLIN:

Absolutely.

TUTOR:

When did you feel most truthful, most involved? Can you remember?

CAITLIN:

Just after I spat in the sink. It was horrible. I was sure he was going to wake up.

TUTOR:

How did you feel?

CAITLIN:

Horrible, Horrible!

TUTOR:

Horrible?

CAITLIN:

But I was enjoying it at the same time. I was really involved in it.

TUTOR:

Moment by moment?

CAITLIN:

Yes.

TUTOR:

What was your least involved moment?  
When did you feel most self-conscious?

CAITLIN:

Well, it was all so much better than my last exercise. I felt so much more involved this time...but least involved...probably taking my skirt off.

TUTOR:

What was your thought process?

CAITLIN:

I started to become aware of the audience and my fat legs.

TUTOR:

What did you do?

CAITLIN:

What you had said before. Just go on to my next physical activity. But that was taking off my tights - which was just as bad. *(One of the students giggles)*

TUTOR:

Out of ten, what was your level of involvement then?

CAITLIN:

About four, probably.

TUTOR:

Then what happened?

CAITLIN:

I thought I would just get over to the bed and get my Tee shirt on, but then my ankle cracked and I thought Gary was going to wake up and that focused my mind completely. I was involved again. Then I thought I couldn't get under the pillow without him waking up so I went over to the kitchen, then realised I had forgotten my bag which had my cleansing tissues and mirror in it.

TUTOR:

Tell me about after the spitting incident. What happened then? What were your thoughts?

CAITLIN:

I was determined after that to get into bed. I was so furious with myself. It would have been so stupid if he had woken up - I was just determined to get into bed before he woke. After all the work and time to get undressed and get my make up off I was not going to have him wake up, I knew I was going to do it. I had practised getting into bed all weekend (*giggle from a student*) but this bed is very different from the one in my flat.

TUTOR:

Less weight to it?

CAITLIN:

Less squeaky! (*A student giggles*)

TUTOR:

What would you do differently if you were to do it again?

CAITLIN:

Do I have to do it again?

TUTOR:

Not unless you want to. What would you do differently? Or are you happy with what you did?

CAITLIN:

I'd like to keep my focus there all the time...but on the whole I'm happier with this one than the last one I did. I feel I know more what I'm doing.

TUTOR:

How would you keep your focus more?

CAITLIN:

I could have remembered it was his test day.

TUTOR:

Would that have helped you?

CAITLIN:

It might have made it more important...higher stakes?

TUTOR:

Would it have helped you?

CAITLIN:

Maybe...I don't know.

TUTOR:

Did you enjoy it?

CAITLIN:

Yes...yes I did enjoy it...now.

TUTOR:

Good, excellent, your action was well played, you had a clear thought process, clear activities, it was well focused and you had high stakes. Has anybody anything to say.

JOVANA:

I thought it was fantastic. I believed it completely. And you haven't got fat legs.

TUTOR:

Gary, how was it for you?

GARY:

Great, I heard a couple of noises, especially the water in the sink, but not enough to wake me up. I was only slightly disturbed.

TUTOR:

What were you focusing on?

GARY:

I had some lines from my project, but after a while I was just in dreamland.

*Laughter from the other students. The church bell strikes 10.00 o'clock.*

TUTOR:

Did that disturb either of you?

CAITLIN:

I didn't hear it.

GARY:

I was aware of it, but I knew it wasn't in my world. It didn't bother me.

TUTOR:

Thank you, both of you. Who's next?  
Let's set up as quickly and quietly as possible please.

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**10. Int. Foyer of Catholic Centre. Week 6.**

*Jema, Rachel and Aiden are sitting in the foyer, their scripts in front of them. Aiden gets up and walks to the double doors of the large studio and puts his ear to the door.*

AIDEN:

*(turning to the women)*

He's stopped again...He won't get up to us.

JEMA:

The call was over half an hour ago...Perhaps you should go in and ask when he'll want us.

AIDEN:

I don't like to...



RACHEL:

I think we might have to get used to waiting in this business...How much did you know about the industry before you applied for drama school, Jema?

JEMA:

I did quite a bit of research...I had friends who went into the business and I talked to them and I always kept my fingers in the pie of media and acting avenues. I'd always continue contact with friends that were doing this sort of thing because deep down I always thought if there was an opportunity to pursue that I would want to take it, so I spoke to friends and people and they explained the industry to me.

AIDEN:

*(moving back to the women)*

Did you apply for other drama schools?

JEMA:

Yes...and I applied for work as well.

AIDEN:

Did you get any?

JEMA:

I tried to get auditions through P.C.R.

RACHEL:

What's that?

JEMA:

Professional Casting Report. I spent a year, while I was working in the city, setting my self up as an actress and auditioning for drama schools, subscribing to P.C.R. looking at casting information, service providers and finding out what different agencies were... Carving up the industry, trying to understand the way it's organised and getting headshots done, I put a C.V. together and all those kinds of basic actuary things that you need to do.

AIDEN:

*(clearly impressed)*

Wow!

JEMA:

I found easy because I have the organisational skills and writing to people I found that I could get that done quite efficiently... What I found difficult was getting the auditions...

AIDEN:

Right.

JEMA:

It was really interesting...going to these cattle market auditions which were really looking for models, not actors...just being in a room with thousands of people and being called in group of tens to stand in front of a camera...and going through all that and feeling disheartened and overwhelmed by the whole thing...

RACHEL:

That sounds just horrible...degrading...

JEMA:

At the same time I was researching drama schools and speaking to people who were in drama school and they were telling me about their experiences...Then I started looking at audition speeches and showing it to people, friends who were actors already and friends who were in drama school and gathering information from people's opinions of different drama schools...What do people think about drama schools? What do you lose out if you do a one year course, or two year course as opposed to three years? What do you actually do apart from act out plays? The whole business of showcases was a big issue as well, because I knew it was really

hard to get an agent. Where do schools hold their showcases and how are they managed? Do they do monologues and duologues? Do they do a play? What are their agents like? What are the producers like? What are the writers like? What are the directors like? How are they cast? How a year at drama school is cast anyway! How many public showings you get to do at the different places? All of these things were considerations when I was looking at drama schools.

AIDEN:

Christ...I didn't do any of that!

RACHEL:

How did you get here, Aiden?

AIDEN:

Well, after taking my degree in Performance Studies at Sydney University and having no set responsibilities, no house, no mortgage...there was nothing holding me or keeping me back...I wasn't going to stake everything on it, but it was quite important for my own sense of development as an actor...I have a British passport and the desire to live for a while, somewhere around the E.U. I have had this

desire for a few years now and my partner wanted to travel as well...We worked it that we would do it together, she would do some travelling and working for a bit and I would work and study and then, when I had finished the course, would pursue my career here, firstly in Britain for a while and see how that works...

JEMA:

And why did you choose here?

AIDEN:

I had been told by several people who I know and who had either auditioned or been at drama schools you have a feeling about one place over another...I didn't put much store on it, because I hadn't really had those sorts of feelings much about things...But I got off the train and I came in, the sun was shining and the park just opposite the station was full of people and everyone was going about their business and it was all just such a wonderful, lovely atmosphere...I came into the school and I felt that within the building...all the people running around and going about their day...I didn't feel that anywhere else, I didn't really have that sense of

warmth and welcome that the school gave me on that day...How about you, Rachel? How did you end up here?

*The large studio door opens and the director's head pokes round into the foyer*

DIRECTOR:

I'm so sorry to keep you waiting, do come in...Oh, Rachel, I won't need you until after lunch, we are really running late...sorry. *(His head disappears again into the studio)*

AIDEN:  
*(grimacing)*

So sorry....See you! *(He shakes his head and goes into the studio with Jema)*

*Rachel is left alone, staring at the door.*

RACHEL: *(v/o)*

How did I end up here...? I had got on a path which was very ordered and straight and I had done well career-wise...We had just bought a house and I broke up with Robin...and had a bit of a backlash of experience...and just decided that I didn't really want the life that I was in. I was doing well but I was 30 and I could just see years and years of doing the same thing...so I wanted to do something for me...because psychology seemed to be...I was working with

more and more severe patients and I was getting more and tired and more and more drained, because of the patient load and I was coming home and I didn't really care about people in my life...including Robin, I suppose...I didn't really want to ask them how they were because I didn't really care because I was quite burnt out...So I thought, 'You know this is wrong. I shouldn't be ecstatic when a patient doesn't turn up because they have missed the appointment, I shouldn't be relieved.' So I thought, 'I need to get out'. It was either travelling or doing something which was just purely for me...I had been doing some amateur dramatics and loved it and done drama at school and really loved it and there was an option about whether to do it properly and the advice was, 'No don't do it'. Professional career first...and I suddenly thought, 'Well I have done so. I have done the professional career first which I am really grateful for, by the way, and why don't I see what drama would be like?' So I applied, went for interviews, got on and then I thought, 'My God, now I can't!...I did want to do it but it was really just an exploring option rather than thinking, I passionately want it,

that's where I want my life to be, because I really didn't know enough about it to decide that...So when I got on it was, 'God, now I can't say no, because what a massive regret that would be later on'...I hadn't told anyone that I was doing it so it would be quite a big thing to say to people at work, my parents, my friends, people who knew how hard I had worked to get to where I was career wise, to say, 'Actually I am going to leave and go to drama school'...But every body was unbelievably supportive and really positive about it...That's what happened, I had been living a certain way and then decided that I wanted to stop and start again and do something that was about me...I wanted a year off, doing things that weren't grown up; basically that's really what I was thinking...I wanted something that was going to put me back in touch with not being stuck. I wanted to play...It is more a life experience than a destination...being part of a young group of people...I don't just mean young in age but young in terms of spirit and ability to express themselves...and being with people that are very different from the people that I have been with in psychotherapy, where it's all about



closing yourself off to prevent anybody finding out anything about yourself and one of the main things that you do is you don't move, you sit there and you literally don't move...It's unbelievably stimulating and regenerating to be with people that aren't like that...Watching people who are uninhibited is just a joy...!

*Rachel's reverie is broken by Alice, running down the stairs.*

ALICE:  
*(breathlessly)*

Has he been calling me...? Am I late?  
I've been practicing my song and  
didn't realise the time?

RACHEL:

No, he's running very behind. I've  
not gone in yet...not till 2.15.

ALICE:

Oh, thank God...I've nearly had a  
heat attack. *(She laughs and sits down on  
a chair to recover)*

RACHEL:

Did you do a lot of research before  
you came here, Alice?

ALICE:  
*(worried)*

Into what?

RACHEL:  
(*smiling*)

Drama schools.

ALICE:

Oh, years ago, before I went to university...I specifically applied to ArtsEd and I got in on the BA Hons. Course instead of going to university, but I couldn't go for financial reasons. That was an awful decision to have to make because I felt I had got in once - would I ever get in again...? And specifically here, because I knew this was the place I felt most comfortable when I auditioned. It felt most like my sort of place...and strangely enough I did the circuit when I was 17 again went around all these different places auditioning. But when it came to the Masters Course I filled in one form and I did the one audition. I was going to see what happened after that audition and if I hadn't got in, I was going to seriously consider whether or not I wanted to go at all because it was the only course that covered all the areas that I personally wanted to explore...The prospectus talked about preparing for a career in the industry and looking at screen and theatre and screen is

something I never had a great deal of experience with. Auditioning on the day, I felt as if the school wanted to nurture each individual - not like on a conveyer belt - churn them out each year as a certain brand, I felt like it was my kind of school...What about you? Did you do a lot of auditions before you got in?

RACHEL:

No, not really...

*Cut to:*

**11. Int. Under the Balcony: Catholic Centre. Thurs. Week 8 1.30 p.m.**

*It is lunch break from the First Rehearsal Exercise. Students have arranged three tables into one long refectory table and about 23 students, both A and B group, are eating lunch. Some have brought in packed lunches, others have brought in from a local Tesco's, and others have made lunch for themselves in the centre's kitchen. Lunch, for this year group, is a "serious" group activity, bonding and a chance to exchange gossip and discuss their work. The atmosphere is bright, light and the sound of their voices is often pierced by outbreaks of laughter and high spirits.*

AIDEN:

*(tucking into a rice and salad dish,  
speaking to Vanessa and Jovana)*

...We were due to start 15 minutes after we had all gotten together. We didn't start for another 45 minutes after that and it was because we were sitting around discussing what animal each actor believed their character best represents, which is helpful for

the individual, but we are doing separate plays and we are doing separate scenes. One person in one play is not necessarily going to care what kind of animal another character is in a completely separate play, they are not connected. So to run 45 minutes or so longer...

VANESSA:

*(nibbling at a sandwich)*

...Is very frustrating. I've been screaming for lunch since 12.00 o'clock, I'm starving and this tastes really weird.

JOVANA:

Don't eat it, have some of mine...  
*(she offers Vanessa some salad and potatoes)* ...we are all burning so much energy; I've never been so hungry in my life.

VANESSA:

Nor me...thanks, Jo. *(To Aiden)* Did you say anything to him?

AIDEN:

Like what? What are you going to say? That's his way of working...

VANESSA:

It's week eight and I've only gone through my scene once with the

director - once! It's all been research, cultural and historical, text analysis, sub-text - that's all great, I'm not complaining, but I need to work on the scene with the director, I don't know how to put the research into my character, it all goes out the window when I walk on the stage!

TOM:

*(deep in private conversation with Gary)*

...It just feels so stale and repetitive. All I can hear is the sound of my own voice, repeating words from the script in my head. She says I have to be open to emotion and to stop imposing attitudes, that I'm not vulnerable and I'm not listening - that I've got to be spontaneous. I can just feel myself getting tighter and tighter and ready to explode. That'll show her some emotion...

GARY:

You've got to start respecting your own work, man. Doesn't matter what she says. Don't apologise. Just do your own thing.

TOM:

I know she's making sense - I don't know how to do it - be "vulnerable!"

GARY:

Stop trying to do it, man. Hang loose. Really, I'm serious, man. Don't do it for her.

TOM:

I'm not doing it for her.

STEPHEN:

*(at another part of the table,  
talking to Lawrence, next to him)*

He said my scene was boring because it lacked energy - I just feel so despondent. I just put everything I had into it and he crushes it and then says I haven't any energy - what does he expect when he's just torn me apart in front of everyone, humiliated me and made me look like the biggest load of shit that ever crawled on stage?

LAWRENCE:

Don't let it effect you so much.

STEPHEN:

That's also what he said - I'm not "letting things effect me" -

LAWRENCE:

I don't know man, I don't know what I'm doing myself at the moment. Utter confusion, total.

STEPHEN:

I'm going to make a cup of tea - do  
want one?

LAWRENCE:

Yes, thanks one sugar, please. Do you  
want a hand?

FRAN:

*(elsewhere, talking to Jess)*

...She told me to picture someone who  
had died when getting to the  
particular point where I needed to  
find the emotion in the speech. I did  
that, but I think I held back too  
much. I thought that the image would  
produce the emotion, but I didn't  
translate it into her fear of her  
father's death - but now I think I've  
got the wrong objective for the scene  
anyway. She said I wasn't "trusting"  
but it's not that...

JESS:

I just can't get my character into my  
body, it all feels so academic - it  
just won't fill out - I can't seem to  
get what's behind her, I've got  
ideas, but they're not going anyway,  
it's all sticking in my head - it's  
driving me mad. I know I'm putting  
too much pressure on myself but I  
don't know what to do - how to think,

or rather "stop thinking" as we're told to do! I'm totally confused.

FRAN:

Now I'm not going to see her again for at least a week - its ridiculous - what am I supposed to do?

JESS:

It's supposed to be "good to fail" - well they're going to see a lot of that where I'm concerned...I understand what they're saying in my head - but I can't see what to do about it.

FRAN:

I'm not paying £10,000 in fees to fail - I want to succeed. And hanging around waiting for other people to rehearse is not what I'm paying for...

AIDEN:

*(to Richard, a group rep.)*

...It's not on...waiting around to rehearse way, way beyond the time set to start - I could be at home doing research...or sleeping...I'm serious - I work three nights a week and all day Saturday, I'm knackered and his call sheet is a complete waste of time. It's got to be brought up at a company meeting.



RICHARD:

O.K. I'll make a note of it for Monday. Anything else?

AIDEN:

No, I don't think so - everything's going all right, isn't it?

RICHARD:

Yes, it's great. Fantastic.

*Fade to black.*

*Fade up:*

**12. Int: Sitting room. Winter break.**

*Ola is talking to her mother as they decorate a Christmas tree in a bright sitting room. Ola's mother is a large powerful looking woman in her mid fifties. She has a ferocious intelligence, emphasised by her half-spectacles and apparently unblinking stare. The potted tree is standing on a zebra skin rug and a large carved African figure dominates one corner of the room.*

OLA:

In the very first month thought I was in the wrong place, I was so upset.

MOTHER:

You don't need to go back, my girl, if they're not treating you well. You are an educated woman, an engineer. You don't take any nonsense from anyone...You hear me now? *(She carefully places a wooden reindeer onto a branch)*

OLA:

It had nothing to do with the teaching; it was just the environment...I guess what I thought I was going to get...you know, the hustle and bustle, a lot of people running up and down, there wasn't that social avenue to mix with other people. The only chance I got to see them was in class and the way the classes were set, you can't be too "mad". You have got to be serene - it was calm.

MOTHER:

*(surveying the tree)*

Well that's good.

OLA:

For instance, in dance, you only speak when you are spoken to, and even then you still don't talk when the teacher was talking. It's different from all the other kind of training I've had in performance. They always told you to speak, contribute, don't keep quiet. They encouraged you to be more open, to be more expressive; they always said that, everywhere I went. I went to Central for about a month, I went to City Lit for about a year and a half and everywhere I went they would say

you had to be more expressive don't  
be quiet!

MOTHER:

*(picking out an angel from a box and considering it)*

Being quiet is good for you.

*Cut to:*

**13. Int: Pub. Winter Break.**

*Tom is chatting to two friends.*

TOM:

What I love about the course is that everyone is really generous. I would like to think of myself as a generous actor, making sure that I am giving the other person what they need as well, and I suppose one element of fear, for lads especially, is that you are going to be surrounded by all these crazy "ra ra" people, and you think, "Ah Jesus, always clambering over each other to get their voice heard". But it's not been like that at all. There's a real range of people on the course. Different class, different race, different backgrounds...not so much religion, but their family has a background to different religions and things like that. *(Tom's friends nod in agreement)* Different ages - it's just very interesting and it's wonderful. *(More*

*nodding*) I have always been interested in people and I have travelled to many places and experienced lots of different things, but I just think that we are all very different - but we are all going through the same process and we are all basically the same at the end of it...but I, yeah, I think it has taken certain people a long time to realise that...because I think originally people segregated themselves off, that's why I stayed back at the beginning because people seemed to be putting themselves in their natural surroundings, their natural habitat in a sense, does that make sense? *(His friends nod vigorously)*

*Cut to:*

**14: Ext: Hampstead Heath. Winter Break.**

*Jema is walking and talking with her younger sister near the ponds*

JEMA:

The most profound epiphany, if you like, was early on in the term - that everybody's ability to relate to humanity, to other people's feelings and stresses and worries, was infinite. That potential to relate to everything and anyone else is infinite, because of the fact that we all experience different emotions and feelings and pressures and therefore

we have that ability to empathise with another person's journey another person's actions and another person's mind set - another person's rationale for doing whatever they are doing. So if we have that potential, then there is actually no reason why, as an actor, you can be limited at all, because if your character is a sum of your actions and you are able to understand why people act in that particular way, then in a way, your character is infinite. So your character being limited to one sphere, that idea goes out of the window. It's an infinite constantly changing dynamic thing, character. One's character and the idea of my character and your character become less static and that is in incredibly profound. So this journey, this training for me has been exploring different aspects of my character because when I started drama school, I think a lot of us when we start drama school, have preconceived notions of what we would do - so we say, "In that situation I would do this, because this is the type of person that I am". I think going through the term I have realised that I have the capacity to do a lot, anything, everything, so that my

preconceptions of what I am capable of doing have changed massively.

SISTER:  
(*intently*)

That's wonderful, Jema.

JEMA:  
(*after a long pause*)

If we really wanted to, we could be incredibly affected by an external factor, but for survival purpose we don't allow ourselves that level of acceptance of external factors, because if we did we would be very vulnerable to everything. So, in order to survive we have to develop these defence mechanisms of blocking, but actually you can consciously let your guard down and really allow yourself to be affected quite profoundly (*Her sister nods in understanding and Jema continues*) Two other things are how naked you are standing up in front of an audience and how much people can see into one's soul. I think that's rather scary. I have been given notes by the voice teacher, for example, which I have thought, "Can you read my mind, have you got some kind of telepathic ability?"

SISTER:

*(looking at Jema in horror)*

That's quite unsettling, really,  
isn't it?

JEMA:

Absolutely. I mean, what do you have  
to hide behind?

*Cut to:*

**15 Int: Kitchen. Eve. Winter Break.**

*Mia and her boyfriend Paul are sitting at a kitchen table. It is dusk. The only light is from a fat candle sitting in a saucer on the table. They are drinking wine. Mia's boyfriend, seven or eight years her senior, is smoking a cigarette. They have been talking for some time.*

MIA:

I just feel so depressed, I mean,  
constantly showing bits of yourself  
to other people when you don't even  
know what those bits are yourself and  
God knows what their perception is of  
me. I feel so sick about it...its  
really scary, Paul...really  
scary...The 3D model - I just wanted  
to die. *(She is near to tears)*

PAUL:

*(smiling gently and reaching for her hand)*

You don't have to go back, you know,  
you don't have to do any of this. If  
it's not for you - leave it. I know  
nothing about it - I'm a sailor, but  
it doesn't sound too different from

being in a thirty foot boat in a force eight gale. You learn a lot about yourself and other people in a very short time.

MIA:

*(taking Paul's hand)*

I knew that we would have voice, dancing, music, singing, movement, all that jazz, but all the other stuff that goes within that!

PAUL:

What is that other stuff?

MIA:

The emotional stuff.

PAUL:

Right.

MIA:

I don't want to show all that stuff. It's so personal. I mean, the situation I went through last year, with mum's cancer thing. I wouldn't choose, if I was getting into a character, even if the same thing had happened to that character, I wouldn't use that memory because it's too personal and it's not worth getting myself that worked up. It's too much, honestly it is *(She begins to sob and hold it in. Paul pats her hand)*



Its just, it's a job and you have to realise that and although you are using your emotions, your emotion memory or whatever, you still have to keep yourself, you have to keep yourself, you have to keep yourself.  
*(She is deeply affected and Paul holds her)*

PAUL:  
*(gently)*

Yes, there are certain barriers that you don't cross and that you need to keep. Your teachers must understand that, don't they?

MIA:

I think you're supposed to find them yourself, if you play with something and it...I think there is a trigger in your mind...I thought the training would be very different. I thought it would be a lot more doing productions, doing more productions and that I would work on accents and things like that and then a lot of the stuff we have done, which I thought, like the voice work and the movement work that wasn't a surprise for me, but I did remember specifically thinking it would be a lot of acting work and a lot more productions when I first came on the course. And that we wouldn't play with things that were too personal to

us...I think I expected it to be more intense physically and I thought we would be pushed more physically but not as intensely emotionally.

PAUL:

You've not told me this before.

MIA:

The first couple of weeks at drama school were a complete total shock to me. I felt awful. I felt naked, exposed and very timid. They talk about having a "tool" and being "honest". Acting is not only about honesty, although honesty is important - that's what I feel and I feel like I have no tool - I had a knowledge of how to use a tool - but I don't have a tool, and so I feel when I walk on to the stage I am just awkwardly naked and not vulnerable... Vulnerable is a different feeling, this is just an awkward nakedness. Not having any idea of anything. It just inhibited me. It didn't make me want to do things; I was just there, squirming at my nakedness.

PAUL:

Did everybody feel like this?

MIA:

No, I'm just talking about how I felt, how I feel. I just don't like it and I don't really see the point, I think there should be other means of doing that, that aren't quite so terrifying to me.

PAUL:

Of doing what?

MIA:

Before you go to drama school, you obviously have a talent or obviously you wouldn't be there in the first place and then when you go there you feel like you are talented, but you don't really have an idea of how you can use that talent to your best ability and by putting you through the process, by making you feel vulnerable by making us feel violated we are aware of the feelings that we have as a human being.

PAUL:

They made you feel violated? That can't possibly be right. You can take action against them! That's a very strong word to use.

MIA:

Well, I did, Paul...You know I am a bit of a prudish person and I really

don't like revealing myself to people that I don't know and I felt it was a violation to ask me to do that. I did it because this is so important to me, but I almost thought that I was being taken advantage of because I would do it, but I didn't like it. Look, even if the shittiest things happen to you in your life, you don't analyse the way you are reacting to it because its happening to you and you don't think, "Oh, I am dong this, I am breathing in a certain way, or I am doing a certain thing, because the last thing you think about is yourself when you are going through a shitty time, you think about the shitty time. So when you are at drama school you have to reflect on yourself, which you rarely do unless you are an incredibly self obsessed person. Maybe you do that but personally I don't. I felt violated in a sense, for me.

PAUL:  
*(his concern very visible)*

What kind of pressure was put on you to do that, Mia?

MIA:  
*(thoughtfully)*

It wasn't a case of pressure being put on me from outside, so much as a

feeling from myself - I felt that if I wouldn't do it, there was a reason they are asking for it, so if I didn't do it then I wouldn't get out of the course what I should be getting out of it...but I don't think that is so much other people putting pressure on me, I think it was myself...You hear these horror stories and I went to auditions before, and you hear these stories that you would walk into the first day and they get you to get completely naked and walk around and feel comfortable in front of other people...but that to me wasn't so terrifying as what we did, so I kind of expected to be asked to do something out of the ordinary, I just didn't expect it to be quite as emotional as it was.

PAUL:

*(pouring Mia more wine)*

You don't have to go back, darling.

MIA:

Thank you. I know I don't...I just feel vulnerable within myself and unattached to the situation and I feel that other people are benefiting from it and I'm not on the train as it were...

PAUL:  
(kissing her hand)

You're on my train...

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**16. Int. 12.05 p.m. Room 2. Catholic Centre. Term Two . Week 3**

*The room is set up for a screen acting class. Ten chairs are placed against the far wall. The blinds over the full length mirror and window near the chairs are pulled down but the other window blind is raised. A video camera on a tripod is set up facing a chair and low table, on which is a newspaper and a telephone. Cables from the camera lead to a large T.V. monitor on a monitor stand facing the spectator's chairs and to an external microphone on a tripod placed near the actor's chair. A domestic desk lamp is placed in order to throw light into the space, slightly counterbalancing the light from the windows. The door to the corridor is to the left of the table and chair from the viewers and cameras point of view. A microphone "fish-pole" (extending pole) is leaning against one wall, together with a light reflector and the camera case. Trailing electric cabling is covered with rubber car mats. It is a simple, but perfectly adequate setting for learning and teaching screen acting and basic technical studio skills and health and safety measures. Ten students are occupying the seats against the wall, staring intently at the TV monitor. The tutor is operating the playback buttons on the video camera-recorder and has just frozen the image of a students face in medium close-up on the monitor.*

TUTOR:

You will get used to your face being frozen in the most embarrassing and ugly poses - don't worry - just remember it's not you, it's merely an electronic image, you will learn to distance yourself from it and see it as part of your work, not your

private self. Not that I'm saying that this image is ugly! (*Student giggles*) In fact it's rather lovely, but that's not the point, either. What I want you to look at is the frown lines - tension along this area - too much effort, drawing the brows together - on a cinema screen they would be fifty feet long and a foot wide! (*Laughter*) What's the answer? Focus on what you want to do - not on how you are feeling - feeling is the audiences business, your business is doing. Otherwise, what do you think?

CAITLIN:

I thought she looked incredibly natural and truthful. But the camera didn't catch her sitting down.

TUTOR:

What happened there?

GARY:

I didn't realise she was going to sit so soon.

JEMA:

Yes, it was my fault; I sat down earlier than I had in the camera rehearsal.

TUTOR:

That might happen. Both of you ensure you are in contact with each other. The synergy between the actor and the camera is essential. Work with each other, anticipate and focus. Focus. Focus.

JEMA:

It was the concentration which made me frown.

TUTOR:

No. it was tension which made you frown - that's very different.

JEMA:

May I do it again?

TUTOR:

Sure. Crew? First A.D?

*Gary moves over to the camera, Vanessa moves to the microphone and fixes it onto the fish pole, Jema goes outside the door and Alice checks the microphone cable. Mia waits until the activity quietens down and the Tutor nods to her.*

MIA:

Quiet on set...Standby...Turnover...

GARY:

Speed...

MIA:

Action.



*Nothing happens. Pause continues. Mia looks at the tutor, who shrugs his shoulders.*

MIA:  
*(louder)*

Action!

*The door opens and Jema appears.*

JEMA:

Sorry - I couldn't hear you. The music from Dance is very loud.

TUTOR:

Cut.

JEMA:

Sorry.

TUTOR:

Keep in your bubble and focus. And again, Mia.

MIA:

Quiet on set...Standby...Turnover...

*Jema has disappeared behind the door but can still be seen by the camera.*

MIA:

Jema, I can see you. *(Jema moves back)*

GARY:

Speed.

MIA:  
(loudly)

Action!

*A couple of beats later and Jema walks purposefully into the room, relaxed but alert, she moves towards the chair, pauses, a thought passes across her face and she picks up the newspaper and sits down on the chair, relaxed and comfortable, as if at ease in her own space. She begins to flick through the newspaper, looking for nothing in particular, when something catches her attention. She pauses as an idea, clearly emanating from something she has seen in the paper, gives rise to a further thought which leads to reflection and then a decision. She puts the paper down, holding the decision and lifts up the phone and dials a familiar number. She smiles as she recognises the voice.*

JEMA:

Hi, Steve, I've just seen your photo  
in The Stage...

TUTOR:

Cut...Thank you...come and sit down  
and let's have a look at that.

*Cut to:*

**17. Int. Saturday Night. Jema's mothers sitting-room. Week 8**

*Jema is sitting on a sofa, her legs curled up under her, staring at a phone next to her. Her sister enters the room.*

SISTER:

Who were you speaking to?

JEMA:

Dad.

SISTER:

Oh.

JEMA:

He has absolutely no understanding whatsoever about what I am doing, or trying to do, or how I spend my day, or why I'm trying to do it, or what it means to me, or anything - "How much are you earning?" is all he is interested in. "Are you famous yet?". He thinks it's a joke. He won't even begin to try to take it seriously. I could scream. I really could s-c-r-e-a-m.

SISTER:

Don't. It'll just upset Mum.

JEMA:

I won't...

*Sister leaves the room. Jema stares into space, and we hear a stream of consciousness as Jema drifts off to sleep on the sofa*

JEMA: (v/o)

He has no idea how I spend my day...no idea at all...Rehearsal day in the second term...I get up at 6:45. I might snooze in bed for a little bit and then I would drag myself out of bed at 7:10, and I wake up with the feeling, "what am I doing today? Oh, I am rehearsing my Shakespeare!" That

moves into me planning and thinking about what I need to pack into my bag to get to school and what I need to do at home before I leave the house. I know what time my rehearsal slot is, so I get up, go and have a shower and I think about my Alexandra directions as I clean my teeth. I am often in the shower going through lines and I am probably going through lines when I am brushing my teeth as well, especially on rehearsal day...but then I sometimes get carried away and I think, "My God, I am going to be late, I need to get out of the shower." Then it's a mad dash - I am often compensating for the fact that I might be running late. So I then come out of the bathroom and I get dressed...I get annoyed if I don't get dressed in a way that I feel comfortable or that is right for how I feel, so sometimes I don't leave enough time and I just throw on whatever I can get. I accept whatever I am wearing and run out of the house and sometimes that can be actually stressful, because, "Why I am settling for looking like this when I can look better than this?" Or often I look at my body in the mirror and think about my figure and think about whether I need to lose weight and if so, from which parts of my body and

whether I need to tone up. That's sort of an implicit analysis of my body - it's a kind of a trained subconscious way of looking at myself in the mirror every morning. I leave my room being a bit annoyed with myself for not leaving more time or not thinking a bit more about how I look and what I wear. Come lunch time I might look in the mirror and think, "Oh my God, I look a state". My hair is another really big issue, because I will look in the mirror and think about how I am going to have my hair and sometimes I tie it in a messy way and it looks really good and sometimes it doesn't and that's very stressful and I will change it 50 times throughout the day, because it might not be right.

I don't normally have breakfast in the mornings...I am just waiting for the train, thinking about what I am going to do today, how I am going to perform my lines and how I hate the fact that it's really crowded in the train - I am always going through my lines, I am learning them or just going through them. When I change trains I try to make sure I can get a seat on the district line. The whole journey can vary from an hour to an hour and a half.

When I come in to the Catholic Centre I am stressed and I start feeling nervous. Other people are in the big studio and some people are stressing about the flowers that we have to tie up for a particular scene. I've constantly knocked the flowers off as I have to take the flowers off in my scene and I haven't managed to do that successfully, so often there is stress about the flowers being tied up. That really pisses me off so I get upset about that and then I get stressed about the fact that I can't do the stupid scene and its more frustration because I know that I have done the scene really well and I have found the character before and now its becoming difficult...

Its very friendly everyone's talking, but it's people looking at what they should be doing, where they should be going, so often it's people looking at the call board to make sure that they haven't missed anything, or they speak to people to find out what room we are in or they are going over lines and preparing for their first session so its very friendly...

I like the building it doesn't feel institutional. It's a very unique

building, it's a very bizarre place, it's not like a drama school, it's not a drama school, which is nice and it is not like a school in any other way either, its like a centre where classes take place, so it has a sot of different feeling, a different dynamic. It's a public building as well, so there is always the possibility of some quirky or interesting or just different people being around and it's a shared space, so it does not feel like we own the space, we are sharing it with other people that use the space as well, which gives it a different dynamic.

That doesn't really interfere with the ownership that I have or we have of the space. We can happily co-exist. There has not, as yet, been a fight over rooms or time or space or anything like that and to be honest there aren't that many unfamiliar people that walk in and out. They tend to be old and quite benign types of people, not harmful, threatening or incredibly good looking people, but generally there are a couple of faces that we see all the time, so we are used to that and that's fine.

I don't stand about chatting around too much, I just don't like frivolous

small talk and secondly it might lead to stressful conversations where I start getting incredibly competitive about things.

It's Thursday and we are doing Shakespeare, so the first job is to find out which room we are in. After that has been established it's then getting in and warming up. Some people's attitude to warming up would be really bad so that would put my back up. I normally get in at 8:30 and sometimes later, but I am never late, I always get in on time so it's normally 20 minutes or half an hour before I started a class.

We start our rehearsal as soon as the tutor comes in and I feel less stress and I feel, "Somebody else is taking responsibility." Then we start going through the run-troughs. I suppose I am an incredibly jealous person and I do get jealous if other people do well. Then I think about how I could do my bit better. Then I would be frustrated that people weren't being quiet back stage and they weren't listening to what was going on and I might look around to see what other people were doing, how they were preparing, so if I thought that so and so was really good in their



speech, I might look at them to see what they were doing before they went on stage. Were they standing around chatting? Or were they actually doing their vocal warm up? Or doing nothing but listening to what was happening in the previous scene? So looking and observing what other people do as they warmed up and prepared.

It's a Thursday, Shakespeare, so probably I'll feel jealous of more of my colleague on the course and the fact that so and so is going out with somebody I quite fancy. So my mind starts generating lots of other negative thoughts about her and myself...and how crap life is in general...So we go through and to the end. Then when we get to the break, I am really frustrated because I am so clogged in my mind with negative thoughts that I can't do anything, I can't go anywhere. I am just constantly monitoring myself, and looking at others, comparing myself, so that's just completely disastrous and that becomes very painful by lunchtime.

So I spend the lunch period in quite a frustrated state because of what I had done or what I hadn't achieved. That might become better if my

performance goes well. What I care about really is how good people's acting is, first and foremost, so I am constantly watching what other people are doing and seeing how they are performing, constantly evaluating their performance. That's what running through my head.

The next half of the day we are running through the play again, so I am thinking similar thoughts again and we come to the end of the day and it's very frustrating. We come to the end of the day but also we might have stopped in between, because the director may have given us notes and said, "This should have happened and that should have happened." So as she is giving notes I am thinking, "You are right, yes I know, I didn't do that, Oh God, how can I not do that again, because she has given me that note twice and that's twice too many times and I should have sorted that out before and I haven't." So that's really frustrating, so if it's a note that I have been given again, then I think, "What the hell am I doing. What does she think of me?" But if it's a new note, I think, "Yes, you have got a good point, God, how am I going to work on that?" Then my mind turns to how I can work on that

particular note that I have been given. Then I will be listening to the notes that she has given to other people, nodding as she goes round giving other people notes, rarely disagreeing with what she is saying, but sometimes thinking that she is putting it more diplomatically, in fact knowing that she is putting it more diplomatically, because obviously her job as a director is to encourage and make people relaxed and do their very best, but thinking, "That was actually quite kind of her to say that, because if that was me I would go mental at what they did, or I would just give them a bollocking there and then." But she was being very kind or thinking, "That was a very nice way of putting it, but I thought it was far, far worse than she made it out to be and actually she should have said, "I didn't believe that at all. You know my disabled, blind, widowed, half dead grandmother could do better than that!"

So we have come to the end of the day. It's a Thursday so we have done the run and I feel a bit frustrated and upset with myself as I am packing everything away. We have to clear up and put things away and I am trying

to make polite conversation with people and say nice positive things in order to stimulate nice positive thoughts, but it's a cover for the fact that I am feeling so frustrated and so self loathing. I can't possibly carry my self in this uncivilised way around other people so I have to say nice things and appear happy and bubble, help people out, make sure that I am seen to be helping people out, because by doing positive actions I would also, hopefully, stimulate positive thoughts.

So I come out of school and there is a sigh of relief and I think, "I don't have to think about that I am just going to let it be for a bit and just be away with my thoughts." I walk between the Catholic Centre and the station letting my thoughts go wherever they want to go and not stressing about things, but just relaxing. I probably would not have eaten properly, because I have been so upset and frustrated. I probably would have eaten chocolate, carbohydrates, because that's what I do when I get very upset and stressed. So I would be thinking about how many calories over my normal daily allowance have I gone

and how have I actually abused my body in this way and the fact that I am from this point on going to go on a diet. I would really be thinking about how I am going to take care of myself better and not abuse my body in this way. But then, when I get to the station, the stress might be so much, that I think, "I will just let myself have this chocolate bar." So I would probably buy something like that and get on the train.

I would normally get home about 7.00 pm. I would probably get changed, day dreaming about what had happened today and how I could have done it better and the conversation I had with so and so and what so and so meant when she said that to me and that might distract me until I actually realise I am hungry and then I go and eat. Then I would work on what I am doing tomorrow, because tomorrow is singing, so I will probably go over my songs, go through the lines more than the tune, make sure I know it and think about what I am going to wear and pack my bag.

I would probably ring a friend because I had a crap day and I just feel like speaking to somebody who understands me, so I would probably

ring my friend and just organise to meet up with them because that would make me feel better if I spoke to them and then organise to meet up with them because I would have something nice to look forward to in the very near future...

*Jema's sister has re-entered the room and looks at Jema, sound asleep on the sofa, hugging the phone.*

SISTER:

Jema, wake up, it's time for bed.

JEMA:  
*(starting awake)*

Am I late?

SISTER:

It's nearly eleven.

JEMA:  
*(coming round)*

I was dreaming about work. It was an awful day, awful.

SISTER:

It's Sunday tomorrow.

JEMA:

I haven't learned my lines for Shakespeare.

SISTER:

You're working too hard, Jema. You must relax. You really must.

JEMA:

Dad thinks I'm just wasting my time.

SISTER:

Do you think you are?

JEMA:

I want it so much...so much...

Cut to:

**18. Int. Room 1. Catholic Centre. Week 9.**

*The studio is set up for a transformation session. Wooden rostra of varying heights are placed around the room, and a number of rubber mats are on the floor at one end. The blinds are fully drawn across the full-length mirrors which run across the width of one end wall, ensuring that the actors are unable to view their own images. Ten students, dressed in leotards are warming themselves up, or placing various props, a scarf, a pair of high heeled shoes, a hat, gloves, spectacles, a book, at the edge of the acting area. The tutor, also dressed in leotards and tights, is examining the lower back of one of the students, who appears to be in discomfort. She nods to the student who retires to the edge of the room and looking round the studio she claps her hands.*

TUTOR:

Let's begin please; you've had plenty of time to warm up. Take your space, please. Quiet please, there is no need for any noise. Thank you.

*The students walk to their pre-designated areas and stand still. Facing in different directions and looking ahead, clearly relaxed and*

*knowing the ritual. The atmosphere is calm, quiet and very focused. Each student appears to be in their own world.*

TUTOR:  
(continued)

Inhale through your nose...and out through your mouth...And again, inhale...exhale...Feel your feet on the floor, be aware of gravity holding you to the earth...See your animal in front of you; focus on your animal, look at the position of your animal, be aware of where their weight is, focus on their breathing...their heartbeat...put out your hand, touch your animal, feel their temperature...run your hand over your animal, slowly, gently, be aware of the muscle tension...

*As the tutor talks the students into a finely focused imaginative awareness of their animals, concentrating on the sensuality, size and tempo of the creatures, the silence in the studio grows deeper and the physicality of the students becomes more released and open.*

TUTOR:  
(continued)

And take a step forward into your animals, allowing your bodies to flow into your animals. Find their weight...take your time...

*The students move physically and imaginatively "into" their animals, assuming different physicalities. The tutor continues to coach them into a focus on the sensation of being and perceptibly the breathing, awareness and concentration of the students alters.*



TUTOR:  
(continued)

...And...begin.

*She claps her hands twice and the hall erupts into a menagerie of growls howls, hoots, barks, screams, braying and squawking - as the "animals" burst into activity or freeze into momentary panic - a gorilla lifts himself heavily up on his hands, his centre of gravity clearly in his legs and bottom; a stork, its long neck arched, its eyes glassy, its wings spread, its thin legs delicately balanced, lifts one leg under its body; a small dog, clearly a Jack Russell, rushes around the hall, barking furiously and claiming ownership of the whole space as a foal, startled by the barking, shakes its head and gallops to one side of the room. The tutor moves slowly around the floor, following one "animal" after the other, occasionally touching them to stop them and talk quietly to them with a gentle calmness. After a few minutes of focused activity the tutor speaks again, over the sounds of the "animals".*

TUTOR:

And move into your people when you are ready...take your time and move back into your animal at any time to check...move into your people when you are ready...don't rush...Allow the time...

*Slowly, within their own individual tempo, the "animals" begin to transform into human shape, but still clearly an essence of the animals remain, a look, a walk, an attitude, a gesture. As the students pick up individual props and begin to carry out working actions, combing their hair, dressing, examining a table or chair, putting on makeup or going for a stroll around the room, sometime talking under their breath, the atmosphere of the studio changes again, no longer a zoo, but a market place, a village square, filled with self obsessed characters, some, indeed, quite odd, almost extreme, and bearing definite signs of their animal cousins, but none*

*the less, human, and often far removed from the qualities generally attributable to the students as "normally" seen.*

TUTOR:

*You may begin to relate to each other  
when you wish...go for a pleasant  
stroll in the park...it is a fine  
sunny afternoon, take your time...*

*The atmosphere becomes more relaxed, almost harmonious, as the  
characters look about them for someone they might know, someone of  
their own class or age, or from the same country, someone to relate  
to, to chat to or sit on a rostra with and survey the park.*

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**19. Int. Room 1. Catholic Centre. Week 9.**

*A dance class is in progress. The blinds are drawn up to reveal the  
mirrors, reflecting the fifteen students and the tutor, dancing a  
sensual tango. The tutor is leading from the front, partnered by  
various students as the session progresses. The music, fiery,  
Brazilian and loud, issuing from the six ceiling speakers, fills the  
space and the students are abandoning themselves to the spirit, if not  
the technical virtuosity required, of the passionate and powerful  
sound.*

TUTOR:

*And turn...five, six, seven...*

*The men turn their partners and the women respond. The masculine-  
feminine power and strength of the music has clearly infected the  
students and their backs are straighter their heads more proud and  
determined than would have been apparent at the beginning of the term.  
Their whole physicalities exude energy, an excitement and a passion,  
which for many of them, unused to such a display of unbridled*

eroticism, would have been, only a few weeks ago, completely outside their own accepted range.

TUTOR:

And hold it. Two, three, four...and  
relax.

*The tutor goes to the amplifier and turns down the music. The students release and the strain of the dance shows in their faces and their bodies. Their breathing is laboured, some are sweating profusely, and they are too tired to even comment among themselves. They smile at each other or shake their heads.*

TUTOR:

All right - that was a bit all over  
the place - let's go from the  
beginning...

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

## **20. Int. The Quiet Room. Catholic Centre. Week 10.**

*Gary is alone, staring out of the window, deep in thought, his back to the door. He stands there, silent and still for some time. The sounds of the singing tutorial being held in the next room can be heard through the wall. A quartet from Stephen Sondheim's "Follies" is being rehearsed. Aiden opens the door, enters quietly and sits down. He looks up at Gary, who hasn't turned round from the window.*

AIDEN:

You all right, Gary?

GARY:  
(turning)

Sure.

AIDEN:

Do you want to go through our song?  
We've got ten minutes.

GARY:

Not really.

AIDEN:

What is it?

GARY:

I can't sing, can I?

AIDEN:

What's all this about? Of course you  
can sing, everybody can sing. Anyway,  
that's not what it's about.

GARY:

Maybe not for you...sorry, it's  
just...singing isn't something I'll  
be going into...I think there are a  
lot of talented singers on this  
course, but from a personal point of  
view I can't get as enthusiastic as I  
should be about it...I'll go through  
the motions, I'll still try my  
hardest...no I guess I'll just go  
through the motions...I am not trying  
my hardest.

AIDEN:

*(sympathetically, trying to understand)*

Do you see any purpose to the singing classes other than just training you to sing professionally, do you see any point in it?

GARY:

*(after a short pause)*

It's probably has helped my confidence as an actor...its something I thought I could not do and I have done it. I may be able to get away with it, but from the actual singing point of view, it's too unrealistic...a heightened truth...  
*(Aiden nods, understanding)*...I think I found some things, in some of the rehearsals for the characters that I have been doing in singing...I have genuinely found a truth in them...and then I have directions which I know just mean to jazz it up rather than finding the truth...That's just not what I want to do. I mean...I am saying that as someone who is not a great singer, but I still think if I was a better singer, it is still something I wouldn't want to do because it's not part of the craft that I want to improve upon or work in particularly...*(He is clearly thinking through something important to him and Aiden recognises this and remains silent and attentive, giving Gary the space to use him*

as a sounding board) Another thing I find with the singing...I find the singing quite white...All the music I listen to is black music, so I find it a little bit soul-less...the singing...not that I am a great soul singer, but it's like it's just, it's quite hard to do...*(Aiden is listening to him attentively and Gary continues)*. My dad is a black American, and we are doing American accents in the song. My black American accent is decent but because the words given in the song are very white I mean I can tell it's a song sung for and by white people, so I find it hard. *(Aiden nods)* I can't attribute a black American accent to it because it won't work with the words, so that's quite hard...Doing the American accent is surprisingly hard, because, as I say, it's a white American accent and it's something I don't think I will get much work in - white American accents!...So yeah...it's quite hard...*(He pauses and smiles at Aiden, who clearly has never thought through this problem and is at a loss to know what to say. Gary nods and continues)* I think the singing is quite white orientated and the songs I've got given are very white...*(The sound of "Follies" continues to come through the wall. Aiden listens and nods at Gary, listening from a different perspective. Gary continues, smiling)*...You see, your values do not

necessarily reflect my experiences...  
*(They both continue to listen to the next door tutorial, looking at each other and occasionally nodding)* And he's a good guy, Sondheim, no doubt...but he's not my guy...

AIDEN:

*(genuinely moved by what Gary has said)*

What about in other classes?

GARY:

*(considering)*

In regards to other things? No, I don't think it has been really relevant...I have not found it hard to be the brother of a white person for some reason, like in Object Exercises...The Shakespeare scenes are something I still don't feel too comfortable with...I did see them as upper-middle class, pompous, and very, very white...In my head I do see them as being more white than characters in contemporary theatre, even though I know that the RSC has a colour-blind casting policy. I know that Shakespeare would have envisioned the characters, other than the ones which were black, like Othello; he would have envisioned the characters white. When he is talking about the royal family, I know that the royal family has been all white, so I still can't get that out of my

head when I am doing Shakespeare. I am seeing these characters as white off the page, whereas in contemporary things, for a start, there are more black characters any way, but I can more realistically see a lot of the white ones as becoming black - its easier for me to see them as black - whereas, with Shakespeare, I do see most of the characters as white, which is in my head instinctively...

AIDEN:

That makes complete sense I understand that, I see them all as English, never Australian...

GARY:

*(looking at Aiden quizzically)*

Yes...This term, doing the Shakespeare scenes, I do see him as more realistic...I have found that I can find a truth, but saying that, realistically I don't think I will be cast for a Shakespeare for a good few years yet, because not only am I young, I look young, so its easier for me to play below my age than above my age...

AIDEN:

How do you find playing a Shakespearian king's part and being black?



GARY:

Yeah, not as hard as I thought, but still much more difficult than the modern play we did last term.

AIDEN:

I mean can you just see him as a black king? Is there any intrinsic difference?

GARY:

No, I don't think it is important. I think it is imperative that Othello is black and Iago is white. A colour blind casting for that wouldn't work, but playing Henry VI I don't think me being black takes away from the performance - but it is still a little weird, because everyone around me is white, so it's still like, "Oh, am I meant to be white like my uncle is?" So it's a little difficult but...no I think I can get past that quite quickly...

AIDEN:

Right.

GARY:

*(thoughtfully)*

...Besides a few things I don't think race has been an issue on the

course...It rankles with singing,  
though...

AIDEN:

You should say something.

GARY:

It's not that big a deal...really...  
*(The singing has stopped from the next room)*  
It's us now...Anyway, we are showing  
next week, it's too late to do  
anything...Let's go...*(Both men move  
towards the door)*

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

### **21. Int. Room 3. Catholic Centre. Week 12**

*A TV monitor and video player is set up in the centre of the room and 15 students, Group A, and two assistant Alexander Technique teachers are seated around it. The senior Alexander Tutor, using the remote control stops the tape and turns to the students.*

TUTOR:

So, what do you think? Walking around  
the room and sitting down on a chair.  
Term One, Week two, and then - the  
very same thing - Term Two Week  
Eleven. How do they compare? Have  
you changed? *(Some of the students laugh,  
others groan)* How have you  
changed?...How do you feel looking at  
yourself then and now? What's going  
on?

ALICE:

I don't recognise myself!

*Two or three students mumble assent at this opinion*

TOM:

If you hadn't videoed it - I wouldn't have believed we could have changed so much - it's amazing!

VANESSA:

It's awesome.

TUTOR:

Let's have some specific comments.  
Alice?

ALICE:

It's an extraordinary experience. That first tape was only six months ago! I'm cringing at it. I've gone all hot and flustered. *(Student laughter)* My physicality is all over the place. Everything's different - the way I walk, the way I stand, the way I move - In the first video there's so much movement, I'm all over the place, my movements so messy, my arms and legs are everywhere, I don't know what I'm doing, there's no control whatever.

TUTOR:

That is a little exaggerated.

ALICE:

Not much. There's such a waste of energy in the first video. I really feel like I'm a different person, now. My habitual movements and mannerisms in the first week were so juvenile. *(She stops and seriously considers)* I don't apologise any more for being here - or anywhere, actually. And that's what I was doing - all my life, I think. But I'm not doing that now...I really don't do that now!

GARY:

I feel so much more aware of myself now - the tension in my shoulders is so much less - in the first video they are up round my ears!

JEMA:

Yes - Gary's shoulders have literally dropped inches! *(Other students assent to this comment)*

MIA:

I don't know how much I've changed, looking at the video, but I feel I am much more aware of what I am doing and how I am using myself, now. I can't really see any change on the video.

ALEXANDER ASSISTANT:

I didn't work with you in the first term, Mia, so I can only judge by the video - I see a huge difference between the two videos. You are much more centred and present in last week's film.

MIA:  
(*hopefully*)

Am I?

TUTOR:

Watch the videos again on your own.

MIA:

I will.

TUTOR:

You are still end-gaining, Mia, you have an idea in your head of what is right or what you are aiming for, which leads to holding on to tension and a degree of inflexibility results, but it is so much less than last term, you are so much more present.

VANESSA:

Watching this and seeing what other people are doing and how they have changed, just opens up such a massive arena for me...I feel overwhelmed and

a bit unsure of where to start...I just feel that I have scratched the surface of this work.

TUTOR:

You have had a seriously trapped nerve in your neck for most of the term, Vanessa. When the physiotherapist has helped you correct that, which I think may be connected with your balance and uneven weight distribution, we can continue with the "hands on" sessions. The more you can rest in the semi-supine position, the better for easing your aches and pains. The semi-supine position will lengthen and widen your back and open out your chest.

AIDEN:

I'm definitely more open since I started thinking, "lengthen". I can see it on the video. But it's easy to slip back...*(The tutor nods her assent)*...It's fantastic being able to compare "before and after"! *(Students laugh)*

TUTOR:

Hopefully, it's not "after", but a continuing process...

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**22. Int. Day. The Quiet Room. The Catholic Centre. Week 12**

*Aiden, Jovana and Alice are in the quiet room looking at a copy of Contacts (The Actor's Directory); Tom and Caitlin are at the computer. The door opens and Ola storms in, clearly upset and angry.*

OLA:

*(to the room in general)*

They are supposed to be creating a good learning environment here! - It's supposed to be a "safe space"! ...Commenting about someone's physical appearance isn't very helpful - I mean we all have our opinions on other peoples physical appearance, which is fine, I'm not saying that's unprofessional

TOM:

*(without looking up from the computer)*

That's what Casting Directors do - that's their job.

OLA:

To say someone's ugly - something like that?

TOM:

Maybe...But that's not what she said.

OLA:

They're Professional Speakers -  
they're supposed to be helping us get  
work when we graduate. Not insult us!

CAITLIN:

Well, actually, they come here to  
prepare us for the industry - to tell  
us what it's like out there - they're  
not here to find us jobs, Ola.

OLA:

It's only their opinion, anyway.

TOM:

Whose opinion would you like it to  
be?

OLA:

They could be a bit more sensitive.

TOM:

That's not what the industry is about  
- if you'd been listening to what she  
was saying.

AIDEN:

*(to Tom)*

She's upset. *(Tom shrugs and continues to  
work the computer)*

OLA:



Well, I think she was just an unprofessional bitch. *(She walks out of the room)*

TOM:  
*(still engrossed in the computer)*

And I think...

AIDEN:

Don't say it, Tom. It's not worth it.  
*(Tom shrugs. Then looks up from the computer and speaks the room)*

TOM:

During the whole term, nearly, we have had speakers coming in to tell us about the industry...and if ever we have any questions about who we need to contact, or anything like that, we can always go to our tutors and discuss it with them. That's the whole point, and that's more than you get with a degree at university, because usually you come out and you have absolutely no concept of what you are going to do afterwards. I feel very much that we are completely supported by this network we have within this group...so yeah...

JOVANA:

I feel, from some of the outside speakers, that there has been a lot of the thinking that we had in the

first term...you know..."You have really got to want it, you have really got to go for it and if you don't, well then, who else is going to believe you are going to do it, if you don't believe you are going to do it yourself?" ...I don't want to feel like I wasn't justified in becoming an actor if I didn't really passionately believe that that was the be all and end all of life...There is more to life, you know...

ALICE:

It seems to me, from what we've heard, that it is so hard out there, you have to want it more than anything else in the world.

AIDEN:

Jovana's right, though, people in class today were saying, "I am going to do this, I am going to do that, and in three years time I am going to have done this." They might not. They might and that would be fantastic, but there has to be a bit of you that still holds on to the fact that you might not, otherwise what an absolute disaster! I feel that there should be a level of realism about it as well, and I think there wasn't. We did hear that it was very hard, but not like

you're saying, Alice. There was definitely a message that if you were determined and you believe it, then it will happen.

CAITLIN:

I had work as an actor before I came here, so I feel like I have a basis to work on. I'm not coming in from ground zero - I think the professional stuff is brilliant, but I think they could prepare us more...but in a way, I wonder, "What the hell can you do to prepare somebody? You don't know what they are going to face when they go outside...You don't face it until you face it...It's like trying to prepare somebody for this place. *(Laughs)*

TOM:

One thing's for certain, it isn't going to be like this place - we are so protected here.

AIDEN:

That's the point, isn't it? The speakers are giving us a completely different...

TOM:

Sometimes contradictory...

AIDEN:

Yea...that's right, sometimes  
contradictory view of the outside  
world.

ALICE:

Why is everyone so jumping down each  
others throats?

CAITLIN:

Because we've been disturbed,  
Alice...We've been reminded that  
we're only here for another few  
months and then we've got to "go out  
and compete in the marketplace!" as  
she said today.

*The room goes quiet and Tom returns to the computer screen.*

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**23. Ext. Outside the entrance to the Catholic Centre. Term 3. Week 2.**

*Gary is sitting on the low wall marking a parking space, smoking a  
cigarette and occasionally gulping water from a plastic bottle.  
Standing next to him, eating a sandwich, Tom is memorising lines from  
an A4 sheet of paper. Ola is sunning herself sitting on the ground  
leaning against the side of the building. Alice walks out of the  
centre.*

ALICE:

*(looking at the sky)*

It's really hot.

OLA:

It's great, come and sit here. *(Alice joins Ola on the ground and begins to sun herself)*

TOM:

What's happening?

ALICE:

Nothing much...It feels ever so empty...Two people in voice tutes and Rachel's having an audition tute. Where is everyone?

OLA:

If we're not called we don't have to be in. I'm waiting for an audition tute.

GARY:

It's really weird...No proper classes. Just hanging around...Nice weather, though.

OLA:

They said this term's going to be very different...

ALICE:

I've got loads to do, I've still got three audition speeches to find and I need to practice my song...it's just weird being on your own...I feel sort of...adrift...I suppose this is what

it's going to be like when we  
leave...

GARY:

Yeah...We've got to organise  
publicity for our shows and  
stuff...we should have a meeting...

TOM:

They said we don't need to do that  
yet. We should wait until we're cast  
in the plays...

GARY:

Do you know which one you want to be  
in?

TOM:

We're not going to have a choice, are  
we? I don't want to get set on  
one...I don't mind, as long as I get  
a decent part.

ALICE:  
(*quoting*)

"There are no small parts..."

TOM:  
(*finishing the quote*)

"...Only small actors"...Yes, I know.  
But try telling that to an audience.

ALICE:

I think it's true...You don't always remember the big parts.

TOM:

Then you won't mind getting a little part, then?

ALICE:

They said that there aren't any little parts; they're 'company' plays.

GARY:

They would say that, though, wouldn't they? Some parts are better than others. Stands to reason...You can't tell everyone's story.

ALICE:

That's nice.

GARY:

What?

ALICE:

Telling everyone's story...that's a nice way of seeing a play...

*Vanessa appears at the door, blinking in the sun.*

VANESSA:

It's bright out here...Mia and I have  
finished...He's waiting for you two.  
*(She gestures towards Tom and Gary)*

GARY:

*(slipping off the wall)*

Cheers...Anybody want to finish this?  
*(He waves his cigarette. No one accepts his  
offer and he stubs it out on the floor, kicks  
the remains towards the road and moves  
towards the entrance of the building,  
followed by Tom)*

VANESSA:

It's very different this term, isn't  
it? We all seem so disparate.

OLA:

I'm not desperate...I like it. You've  
got time to think.

VANESSA:

Disparate, not  
desperate...Separated ...Everybody's  
doing something different...No proper  
classes, except dance. It's weird...

ALICE:

They're preparing us for the outside  
world...

VANESSA:

Or they've nothing more to teach  
us...we are prepared...*(Looking at Ola,  
sunning herself)*...cooked...



OLA:

It's the Performance Term. We do our own thing, now.

ALICE:

I hope they are not going to abandon us...I'm not ready, yet.

VANESSA:

I've just had a good voice session.

*Mia appears at the door.*

MIA:

Great weather...I'm going to Tesco's...does anyone want anything?

VANESSA:

*(to Mia)*

I'm going to the main building, I've got to see the finance woman, I'll walk with you.

ALICE:

*(to Mia)*

No thanks, Mia, I've finished for the day, what time is it?

OLA:

*(glancing at the church clock, opposite)*

11.30.

*As if on cue, the church bell chimes the half hour.*

ALICE:

I think I'll go to French's bookshop  
and try and find some more speeches.  
I'll walk to the tube with you,  
Vanessa. What's the nearest tube for  
French's, do you think?

*The three young women drift off in the late spring sunshine, leaving  
Ola, still sunning herself by the wall. She reaches down for a play  
script in her bag and begins to read.*

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**24 . Ext. Underneath the A4 underpass, Week 5**

*It is a cold, bright, early morning. The rush hour traffic into  
central London is just starting; heavy articulated Lorries are  
beginning to pound overhead. Despite the sharpness of the sun,  
throwing clearly delineated shadows of the bridge's structure across  
the rough concrete of the underpass, it is bleak, enlivened only by  
the defiant messages left by the graffiti artists, who have decorated  
the concrete pillars to a height seemingly impossible to reach without  
major scaffolding. Two M.A. students, dressed in yellow safety jackets  
are guarding an elderly white minibus, which is acting as wardrobe,  
Winnebago, security for the equipment and crew restroom, positioned  
away from the filming area. The camera and sound equipment, slightly  
more sophisticated than the practice equipment used in the classroom,  
are being set up by students under the guidance of a student First  
A.D. who is receiving instructions from the guest director, a young  
man, younger than a couple of the students and indistinguishable from  
them, apart from his authoritative manner when issuing instructions. The  
producer from the Film and Television Department, a women of great  
energy and good humour, is talking to the two students whose scene is  
about to be filmed. The young man, Aiden, is dressed in jeans and a  
windcheater, the girl, Jovana, only dressed in a skirt and top, is  
shivering in the early morning air.*

PRODUCER:

Why on earth didn't you bring a coat with you?

JOVANA:

I've left it in the minivan. I'm not wearing it for filming.

PRODUCER:

We are just setting up. We've got three hours on location. You won't be starting for ages yet, Jovana, go and get it, you'll catch your death.

*Jovana, still shivering, starts to trek back to the minivan.*

AIDEN:

This is a fantastic location, Eve, fantastic. It's exactly where they would meet. I love it! How did you find it?

PRODUCER:

I'm just very familiar with under-motorway locations! *(The producer calls over to the first A.D.)* How much longer before you've set up? We should start as soon as you're ready.

FIRST A.D.:

*(shouting back)*

I don't know...There's something wrong with the sound.

PRODUCER:  
(calling)

It's probably the same problem as yesterday...Reverse the cables and try again. One of the connections is loose.

FIRST A.D.:

O.K. In which case we're nearly there...Tom's desperate for a pee.

PRODUCER:

He'll have to wait, or go behind a pillar. I said on the "Daily" there was no loo facilities...Sorry.  
(Turning to Aiden) As soon as Jovana gets her coat you can rehearse. Once the set-up's complete, the director will need you. Hopefully there's nothing serious with the sound. This will have to be A.D.R'd anyway, the noise of the traffic is far too loud, but we will need a guide track.

*Jema comes over from talking to one of the students standing near the camera and addresses the producer and Aiden.*

JEMA:

I'm on catering, today. Who's for coffee?

PRODUCER:

Things are looking up!

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**25. Int. The Canteen. ArtsEd. Main Building. Week 11.**

*The canteen at ArtsEd. main building is a bare and functional space, with little to recommend it architecturally or aesthetically. A large rectangular room with a serving hatch at one end, looking into the kitchen. Metal legged tables in rows and metal stands to collect used trays, a salad bar and a cash register set on a counter give every indication of an institutional eating area. At present the hatch is down and the only people in the space are three M.A. students, seated around one of the tables, quite near the door to the corridor. Tom has his feet up on a chair and is perusing a script, Rachel is stuffing envelopes from a stack of A4 printed sheets and throwing them into a cardboard shoe box and Caitlin is sewing a decorative patch onto a pair of jeans. A rehearsal piano from the Musical Theatre School can be heard playing a number from "Chicago", the sound echoing down the corridor.*

CAITLIN:

I wonder what it would have been like if we had had our training in this building, rather than the Catholic Centre...I mean, all the noise and the eating here every day instead of the kitchen...

RACHEL:

Very different, I should think - not so personal, but it's amazing how quickly one gets accustomed to something - I've rather enjoyed rehearsing here in the last week, I love the theatre we're in.

CAITLIN:

I don't think I would have liked it so much, it reminds me of the school I went to - the same smell...*(Looking at the box full of envelopes)* ...That's got to be the last batch we send out?

RACHEL:

That's every agent, casting director, and producer in "Contacts". Personally I think it's overkill - but that'd what the group wanted - I think the school's right - they all just end up in someone's wastepaper bin...And we're going to have a "phone around" just before we open.

TOM:

The school does fuck all for us - a few measly posters and their lousy pamphlets - they do far more for the B.A. course than they do for us - and we are paying more for our year!

RACHEL:

'And the B.A. course has a West End Showcase!' - Tom, we knew that when we started, they made it very clear we didn't have a showcase. And the agent that came to speak to us was very clear about M.A. courses...agents don't go to their showcases. They also don't like being bombarded with letters from every

single student in training - they come to the productions or they don't - that's it, really. It's no good getting all neurotic about who's coming to see our production...

TOM:

Rachel - if you don't get work when you leave, you don't have to worry - I've got twenty three thousand pounds worth of debt to pay off...

CAITLIN:

*(her eyes popping out of her head)*

How much!

TOM:

Twenty three thousand pounds - and that's not as much as some people have got...

CAITLIN:

Oh, my God. I've got over twelve thousand and I thought that was terrible, but twenty-three thousand pounds - oh my God...Tom...

RACHEL:

It's not quite fair to say I don't have to worry, Tom...We've all made sacrifices to come here, different kinds of sacrifices and it's all relative, but...

TOM:

I know, I'm sorry...And I'm not saying it hasn't been worth it, because it has, most definitely...

CAITLIN:

But, twenty three thousand pounds!

TOM:

Oh, do stop repeating it, Caitlin, I'm trying to avoid thinking about it, at least until I leave...

*Gary comes into the canteen and walks over to the table.*

GARY:

Guys...they've got problems with the lighting rig, apparently and won't want us on stage until after lunch - so it's a 2.00 pm call.

TOM:

More hanging about, bloody hell!

GARY:

That's theatre...Do you want a hand with those, Rachel?

RACHEL:

You can finish them off if you will - I've had enough. *(She gets up and walks out of the canteen)*



GARY:

*(sitting in Rachel's vacated seat)*

What's her problem?

TOM:

I've pissed her off by saying she doesn't have to worry if she doesn't get work because she's loaded.

GARY:

Is she? I thought she was a doctor?

TOM:

She is -

CAITLIN:

*(interrupting)*

And she doesn't have twenty-three thousand pounds worth of debt - like Tom does.

GARY:

Is that all?

*Caitlin does not know how to interpret Gary's last comment so decides to change the subject.*

CAITLIN:

I said to the costume assistant that I would sew this patch on my jeans, but I don't think it's quite my character, if you know what I mean? Do you think that Megan would wear this patch? It's for the second act in the nightclub?

*Gary shrugs his shoulders and Tom shakes his head vacantly.*

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**26. Int. Dressing Room. Main Theatre. Main Building Week 14.**

*This is a typical crowded theatre dressing room, shabby and long in need of refurbishment. A costume rail along one side; mirrors, some cracked, all old, along two sides. Bare light bulbs are glaring above the mirrors a few bulbs missing, here and there. Messages are written on the mirrors with makeup, notes and cards are strewn on the tables in front of the mirrors. One of the chairs is broken, none of the chairs match and some are clearly old props, painted for a previous show. A couple of vases of flowers, fading gently from the heat generated by the light bulbs and the actors, are standing by the door to the equally shabby shower and sink area. Seven of the ten seats are occupied, four by women, intently occupied with their makeup or complex hair arrangements, one by a man, sticking on false side whiskers. Another man is attempting, with some difficulty, to manoeuvre a shirt stud through the stiff separate collar on his shirt. One woman is staring into her mirror silently and exaggeratedly moving her lips and tongue, another is in a semi yoga position, breathing regularly through her nose. It is a quiet and concentrated, almost tense, certainly anticipatory atmosphere. A voice comes over the Tannoy system.*

TANNOY: (v/o)

This is your two minute call.  
Beginners on stage please.

GARY:

Fuck. I can't get this bloody stud  
through.

JOVANA:

*(releasing from her yoga position  
and moving over to him)*

I'll do it, stand still.

GARY:

Thanks, Jo.

AIDEN:

*(pressing his sideburns to  
his cheeks to fix them on)*

This is it, then...Good luck  
everyone...Break a leg... *(He stands  
up, ready to go on stage)*

*He has said what everyone knows, tonight is the culmination of their  
training, and they are unlikely to be together again. For an  
incalculable moment there is an absolute silence in the room.*

VANESSA: *(v/o)*

I'm an actor...I've done it...

JEMA: *(v/o)*

Why aren't you in the audience, Dad,  
so I can show you I can do it? I have  
a methodology that works for me. I  
want to show you I can do it.

ALICE: *(v/o)*

Calm, cool, confident...

TOM: *(v/o)*

So far, so good...

MIA: (v/o)

My hearts going to burst...

*Caitlin stands up and moves towards the door.*

CAITLIN:

Good luck everyone. Oh shit, where  
are my glasses? *(She turns back to her  
table)*

*Fade out.*

*Fade up:*

**27. Int. Night. Foyer of the ArtsEd. main building.**

*We see the foyer with only the emergency lights on. It is deserted. A board near the main theatre doors displays the publicity photos of the M.A. groups' final production and on a table nearby, the C.Vs and photos of the actors lay scattered. A pint glass stands on one of their photos, distorting the expression on the portrait into a parody of a smile. The bar shutters are closed. The show is down, the audience departed, the actors have left. The double doors to the main auditorium are closed. They slowly open and we enter into the darkness. Vaguely, the outline of the main stage, lit only by the ghostly light of the exit signs, becomes visible, the set unrecognisable in the darkness, the final props, merely shadows. The stillness of the deserted theatre is tangible, the expended energy of the actors still present in the space.*

*We hear the voices of the actors, past and present, who have passed through the M.A. Course, float around, above, between and across the stage and the auditorium.*

VOICES: (v/o)

...In the first term I needed to be  
the best in the class, in the second  
term I needed to keep my head above  
the surface, and now in the third

term, I realise how much it is all about the work and not about myself. It has been a once in a lifetime experience...

...I have a lifetime of learning ahead of me...there is still so much to learn and understand. I can't wait to work professionally, to get paid to do what I love and to work with people who feel the same. I know its going to be really, really hard. But I'm ready for the challenge...

...I am not merely leaving ArtsEd...I am returning to New York...Whether (the employers) come, whether they like me, whether they hire me: these are all out of my hands. I plan to cultivate the optimist within to keep away the demons of disappointment and rejection, until I have the ability to pursue those projects which are of my choosing and make those projects which I feel are worthy of the true cultural architect in me...

...it is imperative for me to have the professional discipline required all the time, in order to fulfil the very serious and important role of being a professional actor...

...We have a responsibility as actors to recognise the impact we can have via the stories we tell...this year has been so valuable, the care the M.A. staff have for the students is astounding and not unnoticed or unappreciated, I look forward eagerly to my future...

...This has been, quite simply an incredible journey...I have learned so much, both about the joy of acting and about myself...it has given me a satisfaction and joy that I never thought possible...

...I know there will be difficulties and disappointments ahead but, with all honesty, I am ready for it...

...Happiness is found in that moment on stage when an audience are utterly captivated by what you do; that buzz, the electric feeling in the air in front of a live audience...one must hold on to that happiness...This course has not just been training for acting, but in many ways training for life...I am no longer scared or intimidated but excited and proud that I've come this far...

...my training has given me a respect for my craft which means I am not

chasing immediate success, I believe I still have a lot to learn and am continually developing as an artist...

...I no longer feel like a fraud because I feel as though I've learnt a lot about the type of person I am, what specific techniques help me as an actor, what it means to be an actor, the work ethic, passion and need required to be an actor, and because I now have belief that this is something I can do...

...I feel that I have chosen this path, this vocation, at the right time in my life, where I am mature and settled enough to cope with its pitfalls...

...I have learned a lot about myself and more about other people...all I can do is go to each audition armed with the set of tools I have acquired here...and just keep going so that my love for this vocation can take me to places I never knew I wanted to be...

...I feel apprehensive about the future and what it may hold in an uncertain industry, but I am certain that although the learning process never ends, the impetus, the

knowledge, experience and passion for the work I have been filled with over the last year will always be the bedrock to which I return...

...Over the course of the year I have steadily begun to realise myself, my inner creative impulses, the way in which to harness my creativity to facilitate a realisation in performance, and where my creativity is situated within the cultural arena. Bring it on...!

...I've been taught to be a dedicated staff and gone through hell and back in my training. It's been the best year of my life so far, and I couldn't be happier with where it's led me...

...I feel more confident and empowered since embarking on this training and look forward to continuing learning, growing and developing...I feel privileged to have been taught by some fantastic teachers and have met some friends for life...I have found a new deeper energy which I think is born from pursuing something that I truly believe in and want to be part of for the rest of my life...



...An important discovery for me has been that mistakes are actually part of the process...they are milestones along a path to transformation...this is something you can only discover by working in the way we have been doing...

...This has been one of the most rewarding times of my life...the passionate tutors, a challenging workload, and many chances to perform, perform, perform...

...I have become a braver, stronger person because of the course and for this I will always be thankful...I want to be out there now...so I can start my next chapter as a professional working actor...

...This time has also taught me that confidence is the key; and if this confidence comes from a solid, truthful, well considered place, then nothing lies in the way. This considered confidence is a powerful attribute when coupled with professional courtesy, discipline and a healthy attitude. Part of a healthy attitude involves having the ability to reflect confidently and constructively on one's own work, and one's work within a group. Informed

constructive reflection on an art form that uses oneself as the material requires maturity, independence, interdependence, astuteness and guts...

...What I've experienced and what I'm now experiencing is the true joy in my life, being used for a purpose and I recognise that use as a great purpose. My life now I believe belongs to the whole nation, and as long as I live I must do for it what I can, this is the privilege that I have. When I die I want to be thoroughly used up, and at the moment I realise that the harder I work the more I live. Life is not a small flickering candle for me, no, I believe it's a torch which I have just got hold of, and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before I hand it over to the future generations...

*Fade to White.*

*Fade up:*

**28. Int. Night. Foyer of the ArtsEd. main buiding.**

*We see the foyer beginning to fill with the public. The box office is open and the bar is serving drinks. The theatre board is filled with student photos and a table nearby, manned by students, displays C.Vs and photos. The main theatre doors are firmly closed and manned by a student. Three other students, dressed in striped waistcoats are*

*ensuring strangers know where the facilities are and answer any inquiries. People are chatting, drinking and looking at the production photos on the walls. The atmosphere is one of amiable and enjoyable anticipation. A member of staff walks down the main staircase and looks around the growing crowd, he catches the eye of a woman in her middle thirties who smiles and walks over to him. He kisses her cheek in greeting and they begin to talk. They are joined by a man in his late twenties who is greeted warmly by the member of staff. The younger man kisses them both and joins the conversation.*

YOUNG MAN:  
*(to the woman)*

So you wrote the play specifically  
for the students?

TUTOR:

I commissioned Ana to write it for us  
- she was a student on the M.A.  
course over ten years ago and she's a  
wonderful writer...

YOUNG MAN:

I was on the course...God! Four years  
ago, now...it seems only yesterday...

TUTOR:

Come and sit outside with us,  
Chris...it's a bit quieter...and tell  
me what you've been doing.

YOUNG MAN:

Great...let me get you both a drink  
and I'll join you.

*We see the young man go towards the bar and the tutor and the woman  
walk towards the entrance to the courtyard.*

*Cut to:*

**29. Ext. Night. Courtyard of ArtsEd. main building.**

*Seated around a large wooden outside canopied table we see that the tutor and his two companions have been joined by another three people, Paula, Ruth and Simon. They are talking earnestly and clearly enjoying each others company. A young woman, Ruth is explaining herself to the group.*

RUTH:

I catch myself doing things which I wouldn't have done before I did the M.A. last year...I can be very free ...*(The group laugh)*...you know... physically and I can be quite uninhibited, unchecked, which is more me...more, "here I am." There is more circumstances now in which I am able to do that, whereas, before I was always checking myself. Now I am more OK with that bit of me, so I don't feel that I have to keep it in check. I am just more comfortable with expressing those bits of myself... Mind you, in terms of lifestyle its very different...I am poor! *(More laughter)* I was never poor when I was working...and I am home a lot more...which is fantastic!

SIMON:

*(smiling shyly)*

I'm only here by virtue of being someone's partner...

CHRIS:  
(interrupting)

Mine...

SIMON:

I'm not an actor...

CHRIS:  
(interrupting again)

Thank God...There's only room for one actor in a relationship...

ANA:

I think that's very true.

SIMON:  
(smiling)

But...do you think when you started, and said, "Right, I'll go and learn acting," that it was different from what you did learn, or came out feeling?

RUTH:

I thought it would be fun...and it really was fun...But I didn't expect to feel as empowered, as I did by the end, or as determined...yes...It is a kind of determination, to be as focused or to care about it as much as I did...You know, I learned so much more about myself than through therapy...but that might have been me, because of the way that I

experience things and learn things...  
and because it was a very hands on,  
practical, get in there, no time for  
self-conscious stuff... That's what I  
needed as a person not just as an  
actor.

SIMON:

Sometimes, listening to you talk, it  
sounds a bit like therapy...

PAULA:

*(thoughtfully)*

I think it's good for your  
confidence, for your understanding of  
yourself and for an understanding of  
art and artistry...for being an all  
rounder...It's not therapy...I  
definitely think the skills in terms  
of learning about how you process  
things or how you deal with  
situations is really helpful and I  
have been able to use those skills  
outside of the training or in a  
situation with a difficult director  
when I feel myself getting really  
mad, I can say, "This doesn't add up,  
this isn't important," and let it go,  
which I would not have been able to  
do had I not learnt that about myself  
here!

SIMON:

It wouldn't work for everyone though,  
would it?

PAULA:

If you block stuff then it can't work  
for you. If you go into a voice class  
and go, "This is stupid," then it  
can't work for you - it can't go into  
your body and I suspect there were  
perhaps a few people that in my  
year...They were a bit like that with  
Transformation. People would go,  
"...I am running around in a leotard  
pretending to be an animal. This  
isn't going to work for me!" And of  
course it's not going to  
work...whereas I went, "Great! Give  
it to me...give it to me, so now I  
use those skills constantly. *(Turning  
to the tutor)* Maybe it would be  
interesting to sit people down, I  
can't remember if you did or not, and  
just explain that you have to be  
open, you know?...You have to be  
open! You have to be open! *(Laughing)*

TUTOR:  
*(shrugging)*

That must come from the person,  
surely?

PAULA:

Yes, but, I guess, it would, but if you didn't know that that was going to affect you...

TUTOR:  
(*confused*)

What?

*The ten minute bell rings for the play to begin. Chris takes his chance to speak.*

CHRIS:

From the beginning to the end, the course was perfect for where I was. It gave me the kind of techniques, the tools, which I felt I was lacking. All through the first two terms and the third term, I think, I built up an idea of the different, the huge number of different approaches that there are for an actor to approach a text, or to approach whatever they are doing, a song, a dance, and I think during the whole year I learnt, not only techniques, but I was given the idea that the actor doesn't ever stop...that you don't attain a level and then say, "I am an actor." That in fact you can always be open to learning new ideas, new methods, new methodology, and new techniques. I



think that was very much from the course...

ANA:

Absolutely, I agree...

CHRIS:

*(continuing)*

I didn't understand what 'safe space' meant, but during the time at ArtsEd I began to understand what the safe space environment mean...I think my analytical scientific side of the brain that had come with me from chemistry was really useful at picking up subtle things about the course...I said to myself, "...You have got a year, you don't know any techniques and the only way you are going to work out whether techniques work is to try them. This group of people you are beginning to get friendly with, you see that they don't judge you, the teachers here are incredibly non judgemental, they are very down to earth, therefore give it a go, don't waste the time!" ...I understood the fact that when I got outside and was earning, you can't take the same kind of risk, but there will be something in the back of your head saying, "I'm going to have to put this show on in three weeks - I'm going to have to put this

on in one week...that makes you give something that is acceptable rather than necessarily something that may be the thing that you really want to tell...the story that you want to tell..."

SIMON:  
(to Chris)

You are very prepared to take a risk...in lots of areas...

CHRIS:

...We are kidding ourselves a lot of the time if we think everything is always smooth. Things don't run smoothly, we always have blips, but it's the recognising of the blip... it's the saying, "Actually, I can do something better than that. I can try that a different way. What other ways of solving that problem could there be...?" Rather than repeating the same mistake. I think then you are on a brilliant route.

ANA:  
(looking through the courtyard door)

Those that are going to see the show better go in, it's getting crowded.

*Simon, Chris and Ruth prepare to leave, while the tutor, the writer Ana and Paula continue enjoying the warm evening in the courtyard. They say their 'goodbyes' and disappear into the foyer. The three sit*

*in comfortable silence, watching the audience move slowly into the foyer and into the theatre.*

PAULA:

I think the best thing that the course can do, is what it did for me. Help somebody to believe in their craft and believe that it is important, instead of being ashamed of it...I began to see acting as part of the world and story telling as part of religion. I began to see acting everywhere and to see that it is a small bit of a whole important artistic me proud that I wanted to tell stories and that I wanted to be an actor and I wanted to communicate parts and feelings...and also it made me see acting as truth rather than lies...*(The tutor and Ana nod thoughtfully and after a pause, Paula continues)* I am an awful lot more forgiving of myself, too. I see what my downfalls are as a human being and that's OK. Acting just a celebration of a human being and who a human being is and how can you ever go and tell stories about characters and human beings and say that that's important and not say that all those flaws and complexities in human beings aren't also beautiful and important? And if you see them in other people, why shouldn't you see them in yourself? If you can't love

yourself then you can't love any one else, number one....! I am a lot more open in tons of ways, including sexually, which is a bit scary...but that just could be my age! *(She laughs)* I trust my instincts and intuition more. I think I am a lot more specific in the way that I speak which is good. Of course I am not completely reformed, obviously all those things can be completely contradicted in lots of ways! ...But I see my craft as being important and I probably believe in myself more in terms of what I can do...May I get you both another drink? *(Paula picks up the three glasses and walks into the foyer. The tutor and the writer continue to sit in silence, and then Ana speaks)*

ANA:

It was difficult, you know, this change, this liberation. These exciting frontiers that I was pushing were great, fabulous, and in theory my partner, Maurice, was totally behind them. But suddenly he said that I was changing, I and I was not quite the person that he thought I was anymore. I said, "Why can't you change with me? You know I am embracing this new part of me. It doesn't matter if I am not earning any money, the mortgage will sort itself out. I have got no idea what I

am doing next year, I am embracing that, why can't you?" ...He is sitting there, in the same life as he had before I was doing the course, doing his job, not particularly enjoying it. I am coming home saying, "Guess what I did today at school?" I am having a fantastic time and he is not. He is in his life and I am probably, unwittingly, unknowingly and not wanting to, but I am probably making him feel a bit boring, because he is not doing all these exciting things and I am coming home and I am totally being me, me, me, me...I have never been like that before. I have always been other, other, other and I had a year of being very selfish and I was loving it! I loved being selfish, you know. It was exactly what I had gone to school for...to become self obsessed. It was difficult, it really was...because I was also very attracted to all these people and I didn't want Maurice to be part of it at the beginning. I wanted to throw myself into these people and keep it separate...you know, this is my straight life and this is my fun life. *(The tutor nods, and she continues)* ...It took me a long time to realise that I could be in both at the same time and I didn't have to choose, "Well that's my

persona there and that's my persona here." I suddenly saw that I can bring that into my life and I don't have to feel embarrassed. It must have felt that I was rejecting what Maurice and I had, or what we were doing or what we wanted and it was very hard and I think he was very jealous that I was having such a fabulous time, jealous that I was doing something which I was obviously loving so much and he had never seen me like that...As much as he was happy for me, I think he found it very threatening and he got very insecure. Because I was self obsessed I didn't care.

TUTOR:

But your relationship survived... survives?

ANA:

We really struggled with it when I first came out of drama school, "You've finished now, let's go away" was Maurice's attitude. To me it was, "No, I have just got an agent. How could I go away? I just can't run off. First of all I have no money, but more than that, I can't take time off, I've got to really focus on this. I have decided that I want to do it." He felt rejected, alone and I

was unable to give him any commitment. The whole world had changed. Before the course I was totally focused on him. Once I started school that all changed...I think it's something I have to really concentrate on, keeping the balance. I always thought I would have balance, but it's addictive, it's like a fear thing, you know, you don't want to do something else because that might mean you may miss out on that amazing opportunity, which of course, isn't likely to happen...It has been easier since I have been writing as well as acting, of course, but even so, I think it's a great danger point...We did survive it, but...

*Paula returns with three new glasses and a bottle of wine.*

PAULA:

It seemed more economical to buy the whole bottle. *(She smiles and sits down. The tutor begins to pour the wine into the glasses)*

TUTOR:

How is Graham, Paula?

PAULA:

Very well...as far as I know...We're not together anymore...but that's life, eh?...Cheers...!

**CUT TO FINAL BLACKOUT**





**Chapter Seven:**  
**CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

## 7.1. Introduction

In *Chapter Five* I presented and discussed the findings of my investigation into the experiences of post-graduate students taking an M.A. in Acting programme; a vocational course preparing them to become professional actors. I also presented my answers to the following specific research questions:

- What factors influenced the students' decision to take this course?
- What was the students' experience of the course?
- What do students believe have been the factors that influenced their experiences?
- How do they feel about their experiences?

*Chapter Five* was followed by a synthesis of the findings in a drama documentary '**From Thanatos to Eros**' (*Chapter Six*), which amplified, further articulated and contextualised the presentation and discussion of the findings.

From the discussion of my findings it was evident that the participants' main concerns and pre-occupations, prior to the course, revolved around ideas of life and job satisfaction in relationship to their inner drive to fulfil themselves, of wanting to pursue their Intentional desires which they had suppressed. That these desires, finally erupting, led them to investigate their dream of acting, which they envisioned as mainly an instrumental and technical process and that the course was chosen on the basis of an inner compunction, rather than any articulated or fully conscious concept of what the training entailed.

Participants felt that the built environment in which they worked was conducive to their learning process. Relationships between each other and the tutors were creative and disciplined, allowing a 'safe space' for a close working environment which was focused and concentrated, but

they felt that such relationships and personal work endangered previous relationships outside the course environment. The craft skills and knowledge obtained from the classes were seen by participants to be tied directly to the practice of their vocation, which was often profoundly and passionately felt by participants, suggesting they were undergoing rich and deep cognitive and emotional development.

Data analysis suggests that participants saw themselves prior to training as less developed and less personally fulfilled. However, through the practical process of the work and self-reflection, they begin to actualise aspects of themselves, developing through the course into an enjoyable and fulfilling personal discovery process.

The experience of studying craft skills of acting, and the concomitant self-knowledge necessary for an actor, may be seen as transforming the participants' approach to their self view, so that they re-interpreted themselves from a state of estrangement and fragmentation, before entering the course, to what participants viewed as a more sincere and authentic self at the end of the course. The liberating and freeing consequences of undergoing the course as experienced by the participants may be seen as consequential to their specific learning contexts and the training and honing of the histrionic sensibility in terms of action.

In this chapter I will discuss my conclusions as they relate to a wider question, in particular, *how does the researched course enable students to realise their personal and artistic potential and survive as an integrated person within the highly competitive professional industry for which they are being trained?* I will also consider the wider implications of my findings for other vocational training. I will follow this with a clarification of the limitations of this study and further questions regarding research into this area.

### **7.1.a. Key findings of this study**

The significant idea and key message which emerges throughout the findings of this research, thematically discussed in *Chapter Five*, and creatively depicted in *Chapter Six*, is the participants' self-actualisation; their journey of becomingness, or being-in-the-world, through their participation in and relationship with the studied course. The experience of the researched course had taken all participants from some sense of dissatisfaction and disconnectedness, from personal anomie and alienation, from frustrated inner drives and manifest unhappiness towards a sense of fulfilment, satisfaction, confidence, empowerment, meaningfulness and personal authenticity.

The key factors identified in this study and emphasised by participants' experiences which created the conditions for this effective learning environment promoting self-actualisation are summarised in the following points:

- The creation of a 'safe space'
- Face-to-face relationships with tutors viewed as involved participants in the creative enterprise
- Relationship with peers based on respect, understanding and shared core values
- Ownership and validation of the participants' felt experience
- Non-judgemental acceptance of participants' own felt truth
- Sense of 'transformable' physical space and 'ownership' of physical space
- Critical reflection and articulation of a language of sensation
- Emphasis on collaborative, dialogical learning
- Cooperative, uncompetitive ethos
- Process rather than result orientated learning
- Knowledge acquired by participants seen as relevant

- Learning viewed as holistic incorporating the whole person and their well being
- Firm, equable and fair discipline
- The appreciation and practice of the histrionic sensibility

### **7.1.b. The significance of the findings**

Chris Argyris and Donald Schon (1974) argue that people's behaviour is determined by their planning, implementation and reviewing of their actions. These 'mental maps', or theories-in-use guide an individual's behaviour in situations more than the theories that they explicitly espouse. There is often a split between theory and practice which is usually unrecognised by individuals. There may be incongruence between what underlying concepts people believe governs their actions (their espoused theory), and what actually guides their behaviour (their theory-in-use), which may lead to inner feelings being unexpressed and unintended outcomes of behaviour. Argyris and Schon (1978) suggest that learning involves the detection and correction of error and that people correcting errors work within governing variables, rather than questioning the variables themselves. They refer to this as single-loop learning. Subjecting the underlying theory and basic assumptions to creative and reflective scrutiny and possibly altering the governing variables, thus bringing theory and practice into harmony, they refer to as double-loop learning. Features that enhance double-loop learning, according to Argyris and Schon, where theories are tested and made explicit, are apparent in the learning environment on the researched course, where the factors identified by the participants as producing self-actualisation are congruent with the course aims of studying humankind and revealing the human spirit. The emphasis on articulating a language of sensation and critical reflection within a safe space are examples of such features. These aims are also incorporated into the first term through the students' non-judgemental study of themselves, through such projects as the '3D Models'. These

narratives of the self, like the 'war stories' (Brown et al, 1989) of the 'Map of Life' exercise, are deeply appreciated by the group. It is a specific and particular form of Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave, 1993), where the group begin to realise the possibilities of saying the unsayable, simply and with low risk, providing access to the distributed knowledge of the group, discovering a vocabulary of personal feeling and sensation rather than of moral imperatives, aided by the non-judgementalism of the 'old timers' or 'experts'. The students are learning the ambient culture and legitimate behaviour of the course, the ordinary practices of the culture, or 'authentic activity' (Brown et al, 1988), as well as gaining a deeper respect for the privileged position of the artist whose work is to delve into and live within the human heart and to recognise it as their own.

The economic focus of contemporary post industrial societies and the increasing specialisation and the commoditisation of knowledge in education and training are not conducive to self understanding, as Eric Fromm wrote over fifty years ago, *"...modern man is alienated from himself, from his fellow men and from nature. He has been transformed into a commodity, experiences his life forces as an investment which must bring him maximum profit obtainable..."* (Fromm, 1956). Richard Layard (Layard, 2005) in his study of happiness, concludes, in common with Robert Lane's study (Lane, 2000) and Nell Noddings (Noddings, 2003), that happiness, education and learning are intimately connected and that a person's happiness is dependent on their feelings of well being, individual flourishing and ability to empathise with others and form relationships.

Without an understanding of oneself it is difficult to understand or appreciate others, or to combat personal disconnectedness or feelings of alienation. This 'understanding of oneself' is a fundamental element of the researched course, the essence of which lies in the dynamic between the highly practical nature of the techniques taught within a

group structure and the spiritual search of the individual student struggling to discover and know themselves more fully and is key to students' progress. Such an emphasis on self-actualisation is in direct contrast to most contemporary educational debates which focus on economic growth, standards within a narrowly defined curricula and result orientated behaviour. Notions of what a happy and fulfilled life may consist of, what human flourishing may demand, are unexamined and often ignored. Parker Palmer in 'To Know As We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey' (1983) promotes the idea that we must cultivate learning spaces where people can be happy and he suggests three essential dimensions to such learning spaces. The first of these is '*Openness*', where educators and participants work cooperatively to create an honest and open environment, which in turn demands clear '*Boundaries*', where all participants understand the learning structure. The third element Palmer names is '*Hospitality*', by which he means respect and care for the participants and receptiveness to ideas and opinions. All three dimensions may be seen to be operating in the factors emphasised in the participants' experience of the researched course, with Object Exercises being an example often referred to by the participants. These are a series of disciplined and graded acting technique exercises, similar in intent to the practice of musical scales, technically clarifying relationships between elements of acting fundamentals. The exercises are designed to enable students to gain a conscious technique by becoming aware of and reproducing taken for granted or subconscious elements of lived experience.

The students are aware of the difficulties of Object Exercises and the focus needed to accomplish them. The challenges are clearly and directly related to the central core of acting, namely a sense of truth, belief and faith in an imaginative reality. It is this recognition and acceptance of their own experience of the world, this awareness and ability to recognise and accept the truth of their own moment-to-



moment sensations, their own embodied legitimacy, which is the essence of the actor's craft skills

Object Exercises, which are the practical application of Stanislavski's theories, are the heart of the actor's discovery process; the very basis of the actor-artist's struggles to reveal, through the medium of their own instrument, their own being. Object exercises are sites of genuine self-discovery and revelation as students find that their art is their expression of their authentic life force, previously only experienced as an idea, or fleetingly, or through the vicarious experience of seeing other actors, but now being realised through themselves as freeing and liberating.

These are apprenticeship exercises and the skills to be learned, the actors' vocabulary of sensation, must make conscious the unconscious processes of lived life. The work is practical, pure phenomenology, demanding total commitment to an imagined world, within the natural attitude, with at the same time a monitoring 'higher creative consciousness' or phenomenological attitude. The learning process involves the discovery of the students' own language of sensation, a recognition, beyond verbal language, of their own felt truth and authenticity, an implicit knowledge of their own being, felt and experienced as being 'authentic'. The students learn a shared 'actors' vocabulary, a means of evaluating, discussing and reflecting on their experience, a language of behavioural realism, the specialised language shared by actors, initiating them into their domain as creative artists, using their own bodies, imagination, voices, and mental activity as their mediational means.

The work is intimate and deeply personal, but it is also essentially embedded in the social for its execution and realisation. Unobtrusive observation by others is both essential for the performer and the observer. The learning is essentially to trust the specificity and

moment to moment truth of authentic human behaviour which one recognises through implicit personal knowledge of being human. The discipline required for these sessions emphasises the dedicated and all-encompassing nature of the requirements of the actors' craft, which are highly specialised and in common with many crafts, often only making sense after they have been mastered.

Embedding the processes and component skills of the actors' craft skills, both external and internal techniques, through reflection, practice and the distributed intelligence of a community of practice, accelerates the students' learning and self-actualisation process, often to the surprise and sometimes consternation of the students themselves, who can find such changes reflecting in a myriad ways on their lives outside the course.

In his study, 'Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience' (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), Csikszentmihalyi proposes that a creative flow of ideas, which brings with it the possibility of more overall personal happiness as a result, may be seen through a number of prevailing conditions, which ideally should be situated in a congenial physical environment which adequately reflect the needs and requirements of the participants. The creative 'flow experience' may be identified through the following structures, all of which have been acknowledged by the participants of this study as being factors in their experience of the course: a) Clear progressive goals; b) Immediate feedback on actions; c) Balance between challenges and skills; d) Action and awareness are merged; e) Distractions are excluded from consciousness; f) No concern over failure; g) Self-consciousness disappears; h) Sense of time becomes distorted; i) The activity becomes autotelic (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

The major elements posited by Csikszentmihalyi which create the conditions for creative flow to take place are also clearly factors in the

participants' experience of the researched course, namely, high expectations, adequate resources, recognition of achievement from tutors who are experts in their field and are able to communicate their knowledge effectively with enthusiasm, joy and passion. Creative flow is clearly identifiable in the participants' experience of their skills training, in animal transformation, dance training and film production, all of which are apprenticeship learning and examples of Vygotsky's concept of the zone of proximal development, the 'space' between what the students can perform solo and what they can do jointly with the teacher.

The particular and specific culture of film production is introduced to the students, together with its technical and highly specialised language. Through the process of their apprenticeship learning the students begin to appropriate the language together with its ramifications and to understand its place, importance and logic within the discipline of its culture, making the vocabulary of film something they 'own' within a culture they comprehend. They are no longer observing, but beginning to live 'within' the world as active contributors.

In dance, knowing and doing are interlocked and inseparable and are a microcosm of the Vygotskian paradigm of cognitive psychology, where the requirements of the job shape how one solves the problem, how one thinks and how the problem is formulated – how the culture controls what we do and forms our self-identity. The students' dance classes acculturate into a skill and bring knowledge into practice in a powerfully creative fusion building a solid foundation of self confidence whatever the natural talent of the participants.

Howard Gardner, viewing intelligence as *"...the capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings..."* (Gardner and Hatch, 1989), identified seven intelligences, which may be viewed as helpful when viewing the education of the

whole person and considering the breadth of curriculum needed to encompass and develop the creative and self-actualised personality. The 'intelligences' he suggests and their development within the researched course curriculum include, firstly, Linguistic intelligence, involving sensitivity to speech and text – an essential requirement for actors and incorporated richly and deeply into the researched course. Secondly, logical-mathematical intelligence, being the capacity to detect patterns and reason logically, clearly incorporated into areas of script analysis. Thirdly, musical intelligence, incorporating the capacity to recognise and compose musical pitches, tones and rhythms, developed in singing classes and musical projects within the course. The fourth intelligence identified by Gardner is Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence, the ability to coordinate bodily movements, powerfully developed within the skills classes. Fifthly, spatial intelligence, the understanding and awareness of spatial relationships, again incorporated firmly in many of the skills training of the students. The sixth intelligence is interpersonal intelligence, understood as the capacity to understand the intentions, motivations and desires of other people, the essence of the training on the course. The seventh intelligence Gardner denotes as intrapersonal intelligence, entailing the capacity for appreciating one's own feelings, fears and motivations, seen on the course as the foremost intelligence, without which it would be impossible to understand others or to portray human life, the craft for which the students are training.

In a seminal essay '*Art as Technique*' published in 1925, Victor Shlovsky, the Russian Formalist critic, discussing the habitualising nature of perception, which makes many actions automatic, quotes from Leo Tolstoy's diary of 1897, in which Tolstoy cannot recall dusting a room, having presumably done it 'unconsciously'. Tolstoy suggests that for many people, their whole complex lives go on unconsciously, in which case, "*...such lives are as if they had never been...*". Shlovsky, reflecting on Tolstoy's diary entry, remarks that "*...Habitualization*

*devours works, clothes, furniture, relationships, and the fear of war. If the whole complex lives of many people go on unconsciously, then such lives are as if they had never been...Art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony...".* Recovering the authentic sensations of their own lives, making the 'stone stony', more fully perceiving themselves and the world around them can be seen as the main theme emerging from the participants' experience of the course, empowering them and enabling them to realise their personal and artistic potential. This can be seen through the Vygotskian conception of mediated action in which there is an inter-functional relationship between the individual and their context in the process of identity construction, powerfully suggesting that the liberating and freeing consequences of undergoing the course, as experienced by the participants, is a consequence of their specific learning contexts and the training and honing of the histrionic sensibility and the mimetic perception of action, which they are undergoing, thereby allowing them to develop and experience a more complete and developed holistic and connected sense of their being-in-the-world.

The highly successful learning environment of the researched course, as experienced by the participants, may be distinguished as a cognitive apprenticeship within a community of practice, embracing a socially constructed view of knowledge which is socially distributed. It also implies that knowledge is constantly constructing and transforming as it is used and that it is a condition of and integral to any activity in relationship to the world; that the nature of learning is necessarily temporary and that it may be clearly understood as a cultural and social product. It may be further distinguished as an open learning system where continuing learning is adaptable to changing identities and participants' learning processes clearly involve the complexity of relationships to lived time, place, body and relationships.

Key factors identified in this study and emphasised by the students' experience which created the conditions for this effective learning environment promoting self-actualisation are summarised in 7.1.a.

### **7.1.c. The implications of the findings**

This connected sense of self referred to above enables the participants to realise their personal and artistic potential and survive as an integrated person within the highly competitive professional industry, where the idea of the protean actor, necessary up to the mid-twentieth century (where theatre companies demanded actors play a variety of roles), has almost completely disappeared. Commercial casting is now individual and based on an actor's suitability for a particular role. Thus contemporary training for an actor must, out of professional necessity (particularly for screen acting, the industry's growth area), become more focused and directed towards the actor's subtlety nuanced and psychologically truthful understanding of the self. Without this comprehensive self-actualisation, actors will be unequipped to play the delicately honed, measured and truthful 'versions' of themselves and to engage with the myriad varieties of psychological types they are now required to create for the media.

The 'commercial casting' policy referred to above is symptomatic of many areas in the contemporary workplace, and educational and training practices which are geared towards immediate material and economic gain yet require well-rounded, authentic, creative and balanced individuals to undertake the work, particularly those in the 'people-centred' employment areas; nursing, social work, occupational therapy and mental health, as well as other self-selecting learning environments, such as the clergy, the police force, journalism, teaching and other related educational trainings.

The heightened perception of oneself, others and the world around us and sensitivity to the connections between them, the understanding of

the 'I-thou' (Buber, 1958) relationship between the individual and the world, the loosening of the subject-object relationship and the realisation of the interconnectedness of all things; these are central to a feeling of well-being, mental and emotional health and human flourishing, and are an underlying value of the major religions, philosophies, arts and humanistic therapies both of western and eastern culture. Our highly competitive, specialised and increasingly individualised and privatised society, reflected in our educational and training practices geared towards material and economic gain rather than human understanding, clearly militates against such understandings and creates in its wake immense problems of emotional and mental disconnection, misunderstandings, unhappiness and human misery.

The findings of this research would suggest that a greater emphasis should be placed on the self-actualisation and self-understanding of participants and to be a requirement equally of participants' trainers and tutors in vocational training. Further, such self-understanding should be seen as affiliated directly and specifically with any particular skills training required for the participants before undertaking their professional work with their clients or public.

As a community of practice the researched course bears resemblance to other people-centred and creative vocational training. There are, however, specific and distinctive features of the researched course, identified in the findings, which bear relevance and have implications for related vocational and professional training. These may be identified by their emphasis on self-knowledge which is understood as being a constituent and essential component of the craft knowledge learned.

Double-loop learning and the conditions for encouraging 'creative flow' are firmly set in place throughout the design and implementation of the

curriculum. The first term of the researched course particularly acknowledges through the curriculum, the fundamental nature of the interrelationship between practiced skills and the person practicing. Participants are encouraged towards an understanding that in order to comprehend others they must first understand themselves, through the course emphasis on developing cooperative, non-competitive relationships and a contextually-relative self-awareness, through the creation of a safe space (a non-judgemental and permissive site, where whatever is thought or felt may be spoken), together with a common value system of mutual respect and appreciation for the variety of human behaviour. This is evidenced in the exercises 'The Map of Life' and the '3D Model' project (see *Chapter Six, Scenes 4 & 5*). Oppositions of success/failure and good/bad are viewed as irrelevant while investigating the self within this creative enterprise.

Choosing to keep her family 'slave name' in lower case, bell hooks (1994) stressed that it is essential to respect and care for the souls of our students if profound learning is to begin. This involves a progressive, holistic 'engaged pedagogy', similar in nature to the 'action sensitive' pedagogy of Van Manen (1990), and places a demand of authenticity and commitment on the educators as well as those they are educating, involving an active commitment to a process of self-actualisation. Van Manen (ibid.) points out that human science research (as opposed to behavioural social science) produces a theory of the unique, appropriating a particular case retrospectively, but that we live and act in concrete and specific situations and relationships. It is here, he suggests, that as pedagogues, teachers, or parents, we need 'thoughtful learning', more than skill learning. By 'thoughtful learning' he refers to a pedagogy guided by notions of the good rather than the pragmatic or the efficacious. Such pedagogy must involve an existential and spiritual self-reflection, contemplation, the questioning of received ideas and the foregrounding and pursuance of a genuine self-understanding on behalf of those who profess, equally with those



to whom they profess, resulting in a richer empathy with others and a deeper insight into our own inner lives.

This research confirms bell hooks (2003) conviction that those who teach must become self-aware both as practitioners and as human beings if they wish to teach students in a non-threatening, anti-discriminatory way and such problems as are illustrated in Scene 20 of **'From Thanatos to Eros'** might be avoided. The scene illustrates how the joy of singing may have been affected for one student by not fully considering ethnic and cultural references. Self-actualisation should be the goal of the teacher as well as the students. This research implies that for those whose vocations involve close interaction and relationships with others it is essential to more fully inhabit themselves and individuate their work by *"...making it present to their feelings and imaginations as well as their reason..."* (Fergusson, 1949), and allowing them, as the participants in this research experienced, to develop a more complete, more developed and connected sense of their being-in-the-world.

From the experience of the participants in this research, it was the interrelating of many elements within the community of practice and the integrating of theory and practice that contributed to their self-actualisation. It was a journey during which they learned to use their body to experience as well as their brain to think which made explicit their understandings, beliefs and assumptions. Through being witnessed, listened to without judgement and being presented with personal challenges, the participants gained confidence in themselves and appreciation of others. Perhaps, most importantly for their self-actualisation and developed sense of identity, the participants' experience may be viewed as one that develops the ability to see the connectedness between things which could also be seen as the purpose of the dramatic sensibility and perhaps of art itself.

#### **7.1.d. Specific Recommendations from the Findings**

- Teacher preparation at all levels, to include more specific training on self-development and sensitivity to the self-actualisation of those they teach.
- The content of drama-related courses leading to educational qualifications to focus on the dynamic between the techniques taught within a group structure and the truth of each individual's lived-experience.
- GCSE, A Level, BTech, foundation and performance training in schools and colleges to examine the curriculum, structure and content of courses for the relationship in praxis to individual identity and self-actualisation.
- The concept of a non-judgemental 'safe space' where processes (not results) are foregrounded to be incorporated within educational and vocational environments.
- Concepts of socially accepted success and failure and personal moral imperatives to be tested and made explicit within a culture of promoting human flourishing to be incorporated within educational and vocational environments.
- Educational policy development at all levels to focus on the development of creativity and holistic human flourishing, particularly through the encouragement of the histrionic sensibility, rather than focusing on instrumental and economic gain.
- Educational theory to re-focus on theories of human goodness and notions of emancipation and liberation rather than on positivist notions and the vocabulary of prediction, control and economic effectiveness.

#### **7.2. Limitations of this Case Study**

Although this project is a small scale, individual, phenomenological

case study (with the attendant limitations of time, number of participants and interpretive variables associated with such research), and few assumptions can be made about the nature of vocational acting training beyond the course studied, I believe it contains valuable and more universally applicable material for both learning and teaching, particularly in the area of adult vocational training.

### **7.2.a. Areas for further research**

The data gathered for this research has been extremely rich and I am increasingly convinced of the self-actualising and human flourishing potential of the histrionic sensibility, and believe it has not been fully appreciated or exploited by successive governments in education or in vocational training policies. I would certainly recommend further research on the numerous post-graduate performance training and more particularly the GCSE, A Level and burgeoning BTech, foundation and undergraduate drama and performance training for young adults, examining the curriculum and its relationship in praxis to individual identity and self-actualisation. I also believe such research could be undertaken within the curricular of related 'people-centred' occupations with valuable possibilities for constructing links between moral and spiritual ideals, pedagogical practice and practical outcomes in the field.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **1. A Reflexive Journey: *The Struggle for Comprehension***

*The genesis of this research was deeply personal. I had been teaching acting to drama students for many years, having originally trained and worked as an actor myself. I believed passionately in the value of art as a profoundly humanising personal experience and response to the world.*

*My own artistic training had imbued me with a powerful set of structured acting techniques and an almost Jesuit-like regard for the artistic and creative enterprise. This had been inculcated into me at an age and state of personal maturity and in a context within which I had been entirely unable to translate the training into my body and emotions or incorporate or reconcile the artistic beliefs with the perceptions of my lived reality. This led to a number of contradictions within both the personal and creative spheres of my life.*

*My understanding of the principles of the inner techniques of acting and my commitment to the value of personal creativity and its social worth, together with the personal experience of inadequacy, fear, lack of confidence and the inability to actualise my own feelings of empowerment and self-belief as an actor, greatly aided my empathy and understanding of students when I was drawn to teach acting.*

*Through practice and observation of teaching and student learning, from the standpoint of a student's technical accomplishment and personal autonomy, through countless conversations with tutors, students and actors and my experience of constructing, administering and teaching courses, my commitment and belief in the profound human worth of an acting training as an artistic education which shares as its goal some of the main purpose of any genuine education, namely, to gain mastery over ones personal limitations, to tell the truth*

*as one perceive it to be and to discover who and what human beings are and to investigate and portray how they face the challenges of being alive, has strengthened.*

*When the course I was leading became an M.A. in acting I was gratified that the knowledge sought and gained by an actor was being recognised as having scholarly worth and was being recognised as such, as musicians and fine artists had been recognised hitherto. However, I, as a teacher of actors, had no qualifications and now had the opportunity to gain both scholarly qualification and research what I was passionate about.*

*The process of undergoing this research has faced me in a way undreamed of at the beginning of the project, with challenges that have forced me to struggle with some of my deepest contradictions and return to my earliest memories, fears and self-doubts. I was aware at the outset of this project that I would be faced with an intellectual and academic challenge which would require a discipline and commitment of some magnitude. I was not sufficiently aware of how it would consume my life, effect those closest to me and force me to re-examine and almost physically wrestle with aspects of my own identity as I have struggled to make conscious what I have taken for granted and to comprehend, separate or differentiate the poetic resonances in my own biographical struggle with similar feelings of lack of authenticity, dis-integration, lack of connectedness and their journey towards self actualisation in the students I was both teaching and documenting.*

*A central criticism of the research has been the separation of theory from practice, or more accurately the confusion of a rigorous methodological application of phenomenological investigation to the practical research project, together with an analysis of the findings of*

*the research based on the theoretical underpinnings.*

*Praxis, or the relationship between theory and practice, between the idea and the reality, has been a central tension in my life, possibly even earlier than my inability to translate my own acting training through my body and emotions or incorporate my artistic beliefs with the social world.*

*My own acting teaching has involved a rejection of Cartesian dualism and is, in practice, phenomenological, although I could not have articulated this previous to my undertaking this project. I was profoundly drawn to phenomenology when introduced to it at the outset of the project, recognising from my own experience, life and work that this was a philosophy and methodology which deeply resonated within me. Phenomenology is the study of the meaning of things as they appear. The lived reality of the person is at the centre of being. I began to read the philosophical and theoretical basis of phenomenology, recognised it and responded to it. I have taught acting for many years through an intuitive understanding of phenomenology. I took it for granted and simultaneously failed to accept it fully in my research project. In writing up my project I attempted to divorce myself from the subject of my research, relying on a dualistic language and attempted to distance myself artificially from the process of the research, viewing it as an object, apart from myself, rather than surrendering to the truth of the methodology and my own deepest beliefs, that the methodology, the research, the participants and myself are all intrinsically related, failing to take responsibility for my own thesis and acting in Sartreian 'bad faith'; certainly I failed to make connections and act on those connections by committing to them. My personal intellectual insecurity has led me to commit the mistake of positivist science. I am beginning to realise that my work as a course leader and teacher to facilitate learning and create the context for the students' development as artists is also my own authentic and truthful voice which I am struggling to find.*

*I have a deep commitment to the artistic flourishing and personal transformational potential of acting training and its possibility of enabling students to survive authentically in a highly competitive creative industry and the main thrust of my project has been to investigate how this might happen through an investigation of my research questions.*

*A further reading of the nature of phenomenology as a philosophy and as a research practice has strengthened my conviction that it is the most helpful methodology to explicate and understand my research questions, although I have found it extraordinarily difficult to bring to conscious awareness and articulate a process which is so close to me as a practitioner, revealing the aptness of the phenomenological truism that what is most difficult to see is that which is closest to us. This is my biggest demon and struggle.*

*It is only in the process of writing notes for this reflection and the attempt to find a form of writing which would complete the project through capturing the development of my thought that I am slowly beginning to elucidate for myself, to actually discover, as a creative iterative process, what it is that I have been struggling to understand throughout the whole research process. To more clearly define what my research question was and is and to specify the noematic structure of my intentionality to understand more profoundly the student's experience of training on the researched course.*

*The main responsibility for the course document of the researched course, which I co-wrote, its philosophical outlook, values, objectives and aims, are my own. My convictions regarding the purpose of acting, its value for society and the value for students are clearly stated (3.2.b). I wanted to establish a course which had the highest artistic and creative aims and my belief was that these could be genuinely*

*strived for and achieved. This, I believed would result through the creation of an ethos and situation within a small community of practice, where, through the creation of a safe space, encouragement, support and a trusting and non-competitive environment in which the only struggle was the personal struggle against the difficulties and struggle of the craft itself. It also demanded a professionally skilled staff with an empathetic intentionality to the course aims and dedicated groups of students. The structure and nature of the school of acting, within which the course was situated, (which is outside the remit of this research), was such that allowed me, on the whole, a great deal of freedom to develop the course and its process of evaluation and recognition as an M.A. by City University further refined the course and illuminated its potential. The move to the more defined and sympathetic space of the Catholic Centre also, I believed, facilitated the possibilities of the course objectives, together with consistently increasing student applications to the course, almost 100% retention rates, a high satisfaction rate from past and present students and external examiners.*

*This happy state of affairs, which I certainly had some responsibility for, as the course leader and acting teacher, was being brought about, I was convinced, by the students gaining a confidence based on a truthful acceptance of themselves, allowing them an inner stability to fulfil more completely their possibilities in the 'outside' world.*

*I recall my own training as an actor as having been undertaken in a state of fear, for the most part, fear of the tutors, fear of failing and certainly, I believe, an unacknowledged fear of accepting my own inner life, very possibly because of the death of my mother which had been signalled, through a heart condition, since my early childhood and had occurred less than a year before the commencement of my training. This fear, which I believe, dis-allowed the possibility of me fully investigating my inner life and accepting the death of my mother,*



*which Yalom (1980) discusses in the 'defence of specialness', had prevented my spontaneous creative development and I feel as though I attempted to construct a sense of myself over my 'frozen' self. This left me searching for an authentic sense of myself which I needed in order to express myself as an actor, a self which I only intuited as an emptiness which I fled from.*

*Through the years of teaching acting, which my technical craft knowledge allowed me to do successfully, combined with a love and intrinsic interest in the complexities of the acting process, I began to understand the contexts within which students flourished and to identify the necessity for actors to work fearlessly in order to truly create, rather than imitate. To be an artist takes the courage to reach into the depths of ones being and to accept and allow that Being before one can fully use any of its aspects to authentically communicate human experience. To discover and reveal ones inner being as a student actor/artist requires a trust in the space one is in, it requires a non-judgemental acceptance of ones full humanity and vulnerability. This is quite different from a therapeutic space, although it may be therapeutic. The discipline is a craft discipline in which one is 'using' oneself, not primarily 'being' oneself. It is an active process with the intention of exploring and using, not primarily adapting or changing.*

*As I continued to train actors I also needed to justify the work in terms of the number of actors I was training for an industry which had such a huge unemployment, low pay and 'drop out' rate. The training had to have its own justification. I believed it was a holistic education, having the possibility of allowing students to become more personally liberated and empowered, through a greater understanding of themselves and the world around them.*

*It is with this orientation that I began the project. To examine, test evaluate and understand more deeply if my beliefs and experiences were borne out, to inquire into how far the lived reality of the student experience reverberated with the course which I constructed and ran and my wants for them as authentically creative people. It is only at this late stage in the research process that I can clearly articulate this and understand the dialogic and intersubjective nature of the inquiry.*

*My intentionality, from the outset of the research process, although not fully consciously accepted, was clearly to understand the course more profoundly in a manner which could be clearly explicated, both to myself and others, to evaluate it and to prove its worth.*

*Phenomenology as ontology, a philosophy and as a research methodology and process based mainly on the theories of Merleau-Ponty, who incorporated much of Husserl, Heidegger and Sartre's work is the foundation of this project. It is the logical choice from who I am, from what I do as an acting teacher and what I wanted to achieve in the research. I wanted to understand how the student's self-actualisation is gained through the course. I wished to understand the processes and structures through which we learn to actualise our physical, intellectual and emotional being-in-the-world and how we learn to fulfil or actualise ourselves as humans. Phenomenology attempts to explicate the meaning of phenomena through a study of the structure of consciousness. It addresses the meaning things have in our experience, in our lifeworld, which includes the perception of our senses, seeing, hearing, touching, objects, events, tools, the experience of the flow of time, the experience of the self and others, what in Stanislavskian acting terms is called our Given Circumstances. The structures of experience it studies include perception, thought, memory, imagination, emotion, desire, volition, bodily awareness, social activity, and linguistic activity, which it studies through the central Husserlian concept of Intentionality and Bracketing.*

*Throughout the construction of this project I found Husserl's concept of bracketing difficult to comprehend and struggled with fully comprehending the notion. Merleau-Ponty's understanding of bracketing as a pre-suppositionless starting point and the (only recent) full acceptance of my own Intentionality, or 'strong and orientated' relationship (Van Manen, 1996) to my subject, has allowed me to recognise and make the full connection between the natural and the phenomenological viewpoint as explicated by Sokolowski (2000). The non-recognition of this and my inability to embrace the intersubjectivity and dialogicality of the project has stemmed from my own false-modesty of not wishing to take credit for what I believed was a successful course and my mistrust of my ability to be reflexive regarding my own Intentionality. I recognise now that I must trust my own judgement, as I do in my practice in the field and have done in the data presentation, "From Thanatos to Eros". The phenomenological viewpoint is the viewpoint adopted when studying another character within Behavioural Realism, when any personal antipathies or sympathies would exclude the possibility of character identification. For example, an actor playing Adolf Hitler cannot allow their own (i.e. within the natural viewpoint), judgement of Hitler to intrude on their characterisation, which would result in a comment, or attitude, towards Hitler, rather than creating a full three dimensional human being, understood from the characters view of himself. A caricature, cartoon or impersonation is carried out from the creator's viewpoint, the natural viewpoint. But the actors view must be phenomenological, bracketed, pre-suppositionless, to create the character. Of course the personality of the creator will still shine through the creation, but as an interpretive truth, rather than a value judgement. It is an intersubjective dialogue with the other. This is the artistic or creative viewpoint.*

*It is this pre-suppositional attitude, combined with the recognition of*

*my Intentionality of 'understanding-toward' which has intuitively guided my research from the beginning. It is an attitude ingrained within me from my work as an actor, director and teacher, however I failed to identify it – yet another example of that which is in front of us being the most difficult to see.*

*I believe my search and embracing of a theoretical 'bricolage' to deepen my understanding, which in practice has obscured my clarity of comprehension, was, in part, a failure to make the obvious, (but I found hugely problematic) connexion between the phenomenological method, with its specialised vocabulary and the methodology of play analysis and character incorporation, which has its own vocabulary and language, although it is based on a similar methodology and the same objectives as phenomenology – to understand and explicate through essences the lived reality of human life. Phenomenology, as Bannan (1967) suggests, makes explicit what art leaves implicit. It has been that want to 'explicate' which has been my intention from the outset of this research, but not specifically or fully enough 'allowed' to permeate my being.*

*The screenplay, "From Thanatos to Eros", was written fully within the phenomenological attitude, however, when it came to a discussion of the data I found myself blocked. I felt I had so much to say and no means to say it. I had lost my intellectual way. The language of phenomenology, which had first enthused me and led me into intellectual scholarship, and would allow me to analyse the work had become diluted into a general contextual background, which I understood as 'bricolage', but was unhelpful in close analysis. My 'block' persisted into the chapter on recommendations.*

*The key feature of both the creative and the phenomenological attitude, what Michael Chekhov refers to as the Higher Creative State, is a qualitative change in consciousness, in ones intentionality, towards*

*an 'understanding', using the transcendental aspect of the self, that aspect concerned with rationality, morality and judgement. It is this aspect, this transcendental intentionality which takes practice and refinement and which releases us from the egocentric or empirical aspect of the self, allows us to contemplate and reflect on the world and gives us greater comprehension of ourselves and others, allowing self-actualising to develop. A first step in this process is an increased understanding of oneself from the phenomenological viewpoint, from the intentionality of 'toward-understanding', gained from an examination of oneself, which is conducted during the initial phase of the student actors training on the course.*

*The struggle to comprehend and reflect has faced me with my own existential crisis as I have fought to make sense of the criticisms and review the thesis in the light of the recommendations. To accept the challenge of phenomenological writing, which I find as exciting and challenging as the creative work in my professional life, (and remarkably similar except that it must be articulated through the act of writing rather than through a specialised vocabulary and language of bodily and emotional sensation), has been, for me, as personally difficult as the challenge of acting truthfully. Phenomenological writing demands a personal honesty and self-revelation as great as the craft of acting. This has faced me with my personal demons, namely, a feeling of inadequacy, a fear of 'failing to measure up', the fear of self-actualisation; the very same fear which it has been my work as an acting teacher attempting to release others from. It is the intentionality towards overcoming by understanding my own debilitating psychological feature which, I believe, is the essence of the immensely powerful driving force behind my teaching and in a final act of determination, to comprehend and to allow myself to develop, behind this research project.*

*In the revising of this project and in this reflective essay I trust I will be*

*able to celebrate the course and also the possibility of my own self actualisation which would be a confirmation of the objectives of both the course and my own conscious Intentionality, as well as a celebration of the possibilities of the phenomenological method.*

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## **2. Letter to transcriber.**

**Date:** March 2006

**To:** **June Daniel-Lee**, the transcriber of the Research Interviews for Adrian James

The recordings you will be receiving are approximately one hour in length and form a major part of my data collection for a PhD research project in adult vocational education which I am undertaking at City University, London. I am studying the creative learning process of acting students and former students of my postgraduate M.A. acting course at **ArtsEd**. School of Acting, where I am the Course Director.

I anticipate interviewing between 4 to 8 participants between April and the end of July 2006, and about 4 students in December 2006. I will then have a clearer idea, I trust, of how I should proceed!

### **Transcription from Digital Voice Recorder**

#### **Instructions:**

- My primary concern is that full justice is done to interpreting the meaning that the participants wish to convey during the interview process.
- The transcription should be “in harmony with the subject’s general mode of expression” (Kvale, 1996) – indications should be made for: pauses, repetitions, changes of volume or tone of voice, laughter, tears, coughs, sighs, “hmms”.

- The transcription should be verbatim, i.e. not “cleaned up”.
- Punctuation should be used as sensitively as possible to indicate the participants intended meaning, not necessarily grammatically correct meaning.
- All the interviewers’ interruptions should be transcribed.
- Transcriptions should be single spaced with wide margins.
- Transcriptions should be headed with the Participants name, date, time and place of recording, as stated at the beginning of the recording and pages should be numbered and referenced, (in case of being mislaid)

## **Ethical Considerations**

The interviews contained on the Digital Voice Recorder will contain personal and sensitive information, protected by the Data Protection Act (1998).

If you discuss any of the information contained on the tapes, **the names of the participants must not be disclosed**, except to the interviewer. **It is essential that the anonymity of the participants are respected**

When the transcriptions are completed, please send the typed transcription and return the memory stick to me, and erase the recording completely from your computer, to ensure the continued confidentiality and privacy of the participant’s contributions to this research project.

Please don’t hesitate to contact me at any time if you have any concerns or questions about the interviews. I will be very happy to discuss any issues regarding the interviews or the project itself.

Thank you for your work and understanding of the nature of this research project.

### **3. Interview Procedure Memo.**

March 06

#### **Interview Procedure:**

##### **Research Preliminaries**

- Contact participant by person, e mail or phone: informal inquiry
- Send or give formal Explanatory Letter and Participant Release form
- On receipt of signed Release Form, contact to arrange interview venue
- Confirm Interview Venue and send Interview Guide and suggestions for pre-interview preparation, i.e. any other suggestions for conversation re: subject, bring actors journal, critical appraisals, Alex. Drawings, road of life or 3 D. models.
- Check all equipment.
- Take bottle of wine & token gift (candle, soap, chocs. bottle of wine)

##### **Before Recording Interview**

- Check participants agreement and comfort & explain procedure
- Check and set equipment and recording quality
- Glass of wine if appropriate and introductory chat re: question guide.
- Turn on digital voice recorder and note participants name, date and time and place of interview and any other relevant information.
- Ask first question and *Listen* to the answer

##### **Conduct Conversation**

(See interview guide, questions and notes)

##### **After Interview**

- Turn off equipment and ensure it has recorded
- Thank participant & ensure they are happy with the interview, if not take appropriate action.
- Inform participant of your reaction to the interview
- Give token gift and leave

##### **On Return to Base**

- Write field notes and context of interview
- Copy recording to my laptop on Digital Voice Editor 2
- Send Memory Stick of the interview to the transcriber
- Listen to interview and take preliminary notes
- Start analysis process

##### **Ensure Participant is -**

- Sent "thank you " letter
- Sent transcript etc for member checking.



- Keep informed of project.

**On Receiving Transcript**

- Read through, check with Digital Voice Recording for accuracy and take any notes.
- Begin analysis
- Adapt interview questions etc in the light of findings

## 4. Interview Guides

### (i) Participants Interview Guide and Questions for Former Students

I would like to have a conversation with you about your personal experience of your acting training – what brought you to the course and how the course affected you both during and after it.

Any details, stories, feelings, revelations, frustrations, disappointments, joys – anything at all will be interesting to me. If you have your journal it may remind you of things or stimulate an emotion – the following list of questions are the kinds of things I will ask, or you may find other questions more relevant, the main thing is that it is about what YOU find important or worthwhile talking about regarding your training – I want to know about YOUR EXPERIENCE.

(Remember: this will be confidential – your identity will remain anonymous)

---

- How did you come to train at that particular point in time?
- What did you want to get from the training?
- Tell me the story of the year for you – what you went through and what you were left with
- What has the course done for you – in yourself, in your life?
- Is there a gap between what you learned on the course and what you need in the industry?
- How do you view acting now as opposed to before and during your course?
- In what ways has the training influenced you? (Specific stories?)
- How do you feel you were used (physically, emotionally, psychologically, spiritually) in the training?
- How has the discipline and structure of the course influenced you?
- What were the most important things in the training for you?
- What were the least important things in the training for you?
- How would you describe yourself at the beginning of the course?
- How would you describe yourself at the end of the course?
- How would you describe yourself now?
- What was the nature of the relationships you formed on the course?
- Have your views on what you need to learn changed since being on the course?
- What is your view of the ideal actor?
- What do you need to learn to be that actor?
- What is the course good for?
- What would you say to someone who was thinking of training to be an actor?

**Thank you for agreeing to talk to me about these things.  
Adrian.**

## **(ii) Participants Interview Guide and Questions for Current Students**

I would like to have a conversation with you about your personal experience of your acting training - what brought you to the course and the effect it is having on you.

Any stories, details, feelings, revelations, frustrations, disappointments, joys – anything at all will be interesting to me. Looking at your journal may remind you of things or stimulate an emotion – the following list of questions are the kinds of things I will ask, or you may find other questions more relevant, the main thing is that it is about what YOU find important or worthwhile talking about regarding your training and what you are undergoing. – I want to know about YOUR EXPERIENCE. (Remember: this will be confidential I – your identity will remain anonymous)

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- How important was it for you, getting into drama school?
- How did you come to train at this particular point in time?
- What is it like for you to be on this course?
- What do you want from the training?
- Are you getting those things? – If so how?
- How do you feel you have benefited so far?
- What has been negative in your experience?
- What are you searching for?
- What have you found?
- What is it like for you to do what you do?
- What are your relationships like – with other students on the course, staff, friends outside, family?
- Would you reconstruct a typical day for me – from waking to sleeping? (Have your dreams been affected?)
- Would you reconstruct in detail your experience of any one class for me?
- How has being on this course affected you? (attitudes, beliefs, wants, feelings)
- Has anything been unexpected about what you are experiencing?
- What has the experience of being on the course done for you so far?
- Have your views on what you need to learn changed since being on the course?
- What is the most/least important thing you have learned on the course so far?

**Thank you for agreeing to talk to me about these things.  
Adrian.**

## 5. Introductory letter

This formal letter is a follow-up to my phone conversation with you.

As part of my professional development and understanding of the nature of the creative process, I am undertaking a research degree at City University.

I am interested in the ways in which actors experience the learning of their craft. I want to know about the joys, excitements, highs and lows, confusions, epiphanies, pains and pleasures of learning to become artists and how your training has influenced you. In other words, I want to understand more about the process you underwent as you trained. I know about your training from my own point of view as a teacher of acting and as someone who trained as an actor a long time ago! I want to more fully understand the process from your point of view.

I would like to have an extended conversation with you about your thoughts reactions, feelings and reflections as you went through your training year, and afterwards and possibly to use some of your writing about your work process in my dissertation.

The objective of my research is a pedagogical and artistic one: to help me become a more sensitive and astute teacher of actors.

I would like to audio record an extended conversation with you for about an hour and enclose a list of the possible questions I would like to discuss for your perusal and agreement.

I would also be very grateful if you would read my transcription analysis of our conversation and comment on it.

I may want to have a follow up conversation with you – but of course you don't need to agree to that!

The following precepts would apply to my study:

- You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time
- I will do my utmost to ensure that your privacy and confidentiality would be protected at all times in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- Any information or views given to me would only be used anonymously and unidentifiably, unless you specifically agree otherwise.
- I will store any information that you have given me about your experience in a safe and secure place that is in my home.

I value your participation, which I hope you will find enjoyable and I will be delighted to answer any further questions you may have regarding the nature or use of my dissertation.

If you are happy to participate in my study of actor training, would you please sign the attached form and return it to me? I enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

When I have received your agreement I will contact you to agree a mutually convenient time and place for our conversation.

Many thanks and best wishes,

## 6. Participation-Release Agreement

I agree to participate in the research study as described in the attached letter. I understand the purpose and nature of the study and am participating voluntarily. I grant permission for the data to be used in the process of completing a PhD. Degree including a dissertation and any other future publication. I understand that my name and other demographic information which might identify me will not be used.

\_\_\_\_\_ (signature)

Research Participant

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printed name.

## 7. Follow up letter

This formal letter is a follow-up to my conversation with you.

As part of my professional development and understanding of the nature of the creative process, I am undertaking a research degree at City University.

I am interested in the ways in which actors experience the learning of their craft. I want to know about the joys, excitements, highs and lows, confusions, epiphanies, pains and pleasures of learning to become artists and how your training has influenced you. In other words, I want to understand more about the process you are undergoing as you train. I know about your training from my own point of view as a teacher of acting and as someone who trained as an actor a long time ago! I want to more fully understand the process from your point of view.

I would like to have an extended conversation with you about your thoughts, reactions, feelings and reflections as you undergo your training and possibly to use some of your writing about your work process in my dissertation.

The objective of my research is a pedagogical and artistic one: to help me become a more sensitive and astute teacher of actors.

I would like to audio record an extended conversation with you for about an hour and enclose a list of the possible questions I would like to discuss for your perusal and agreement.

I would also be very grateful if you would read my transcription analysis of our conversation and comment on it.

I may want to have a follow up conversation with you – but of course you don't need to agree to that!

*Your participation in my study is completely voluntary and would of course have absolutely no bearing whatsoever on your own M.A. degree.*

The following precepts would apply to my study:

- You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time and this will not affect our professional relationship or your attendance on this course
- I will do my utmost to ensure that your privacy and confidentiality would be protected at all times in accordance with the Data Protection Act.
- Any information or views given to me would only be used anonymously and unidentifiably, unless you specifically agree



otherwise.

- I will store any information that you have given me about your experience in a safe and secure place that is in my home.

I value your participation, which I hope you will find enjoyable and I will be delighted to answer any further questions you may have regarding the nature or use of my dissertation.

If you are happy to participate in my study of actor training, would you please sign the attached form and return it to me?

When I have received your agreement I will contact you to agree a mutually convenient time and place for our conversation.

Many thanks and best wishes,

## **8. Member Check Letter**

Dear

I enclose a “reduced narrative profile” of our interview. That is a shortened version of it. I have tried to get over an accurate picture of what you intended to say. I would really appreciate it if you would read it and make ANY CHANGES you wish if you feel I have been inaccurate in any way to our meeting. Also if you would like to add to anything or you have changed your opinion – please feel free to comment!

Please write on the copy I enclose and when you are happy with it, please sign the bottom of the profile and send it back to me in the s.a.e.

Many thanks for your very valuable help with my research.

Best wishes,

## 9. Excerpts from Reduced Narrative Profiles

N.B. (Each bullet point excerpt is from a different reduced profile)

- I was determined to get as much as I could from the work. **Trilby** was great for my confidence and I was developing, learning to see the world in a different way, I could relax and stop being a cynic, so I worked hard and had an amazing time. I had some amazing parts and felt very stretched. Movement was good for me; I think it was, particularly for girls, not having trained as a dancer, I began to feel less self-conscious about my body.
- The professional preparation classes could have prepared us more for what we were going to meet when we left – but I don't know how – you can't really know until you are out there, like drama school itself.
- The best thing that it did for me, the training, was to help me believe in my craft. I began to see acting as part of the world, part of story telling, religion, tribes and television, to see acting everywhere as a small bit of the whole artistic thing that the world couldn't survive without. Drama school made me proud that I wanted to tell stories, and made me see acting as truth, not lies.
- I think your craft is very personal to you. I was given 9 months to reflect on it and what you get from the training is very personal. I don't see the training as finishing; the training got me to ask questions about what I need to look for, which was what I needed, as before I didn't know what questions to ask. It taught me to communicate and get on with people in a relaxed sociable way; it was good for giving me a vocabulary of my work. The gap was the business side – but I 'm not sure what could have been done – without the craft, as was said to us, you fall at the first hurdle – if you know your craft, you can find out the rest.
- I used to see acting as beginning and ending with the play, whereas now I see it as a craft, pervading my whole life, my thoughts, and that you cannot separate who you are from yourself as an actor; that it is and has been part of me since I was born. The people on the course were different from the expectations I had, they were not egotistical or self important, they were nice and decent and good listeners, they weren't affected, they were like people in normal life – that may be because of the emphasis of the course, on using yourself, and perhaps because of the way they were auditioned and selected. – everyone was quite relaxed, not like me!
- It was exceptionally important for me getting into drama school. I had always wanted to be an actor but I had never considered it feasible. I studied very hard at school and at university and there

was always something getting in the way of acting. About halfway through a year off during my university I discovered I didn't want to do what I was doing. I returned to university, finished my final year and came straight to England with the idea of working as a **vet** and working my way into acting. I was desperate; I knew I just couldn't stand being a vet any more.

- I had a very black and white sort of upbringing, my parents were very supportive of whatever I wanted to do, but I thought that acting was something that happened to other people. I was good at sport and music and drama but believed that they weren't the kind of things you did in the real world. An uncle suggested that I could be a **vet** and I would be **helping animals** and I thought it was an intelligent thing to do and became obsessive about it. Acting just wasn't a practical option. I was very happy when I started to train but about halfway through I had quite a severe depression, I knew something was severely wrong. I heard about a research project and made a big decision to take a year off and join this research project in **Vienna**. It meant changing what I believed would be my life for the next ten years so it was a big decision. Out of the vet environment I realised just how much I didn't like it. This was hard to do, because you have to be obsessive about being a vet, you have to like it, it's hard to get in and people were shocked when I admitted I didn't like it. You have to be devoted to it. I realised I had to work, I had to have a career, however sick I was of it, I knew I would be employable so I returned, graduated as a vet (7 yrs training) and when I came to England I got the most horrific job, for ten months I was working the most insane hours as a **vet** and had no time to do anything else. Then I struck a deal with my employer, and I started doing a part time drama course and began auditioning for drama schools the following year. Part of me didn't believe I would ever be accepted to train as an actor.

## **10. Examples from Research Journals**

## **11. Examples from Reflective Journals**

## **12. Example from Spider Graph of Codings**

### **13. Example of analysis of Critical Appraisal**



## **14. Examples of Solicited Material**

## **15. Contextual Notes for “From Thanatos to Eros”**

The following sections contextualise and form notes to my presentation, ‘**From Thanatos to Eros**’, which forms *Chapter Six* of this study.

In order to make the following sections fully comprehensible I suggest that they are read in conjunction with the scenes to which they refer in *Chapter Six*.

### **5.3.a. Scene 2 - “I Want To...” montage**

These quotes are taken from the students written ‘Statement of Intent’, in answer to the question “How do you feel now after Induction?” (2005) (See *Appendix 14*)

### **5.3.b. Scene 3 - Alice Is Late**

From ‘Student Regulations: Lateness/Absence/Disciplinary Policy’ –  
“...any student who is late for their first class will be sent home for the day and a ‘lateness/absence caution’ will be issued...”

### **5.3.c. Scene 5 - Personages**

See *Appendix 14* for Photos of 3D Models.

### **5.3.d. Scene 11 - Lunch Time**

During their induction week (Week 1) the students are asked about their previous experience of acting. They would have previously answered a similar question on their audition application form. Typically they are asked, within an introductory seminar session on Behavioural Characteristics ‘What have you done before?’ ‘How have you approached playing a character?’ and ‘What has been the rehearsal process?’ The answers, from my personal experience, tend to

fall into the following categories for a group of about 25 - 30 students asked over a period of years (2000- 2007):

*Previous Experience:*

- A few students had worked professionally, either as a child actor or as an adult, either on the stage or on television or film. One or two would have acted in commercials. One in pantomime. A couple in summer Camps in the U.S.
- Most would have had experience, some considerable, at university level.
- A few would have worked on the fringe or in Festivals (e.g. Edinburgh)
- A few would have amateur experience, poor, mixed and good.
- A few would have had no experience at all, except for school plays, at various levels.

*For character work:*

- Instinctive, with little reflection
- Elements of characterization from observation, discussion with other actors and the director,
- Previous knowledge of psychology, reading and reflection,
- Lectures and readings on Stanislavski techniques
- Previous classes in acting.

*For rehearsal process:*

- A wide range of rehearsal techniques from, 'learn your lines and don't bump into the furniture' (to quote Noel Coward) to post-modern, physical theatre and performance-art techniques had been experienced in varying degrees by most of the students. A few students had never experienced a full blown rehearsal process leading to a performance.
- Very occasionally an individual student had experienced a company

based, methodically structured process.

- No students had worked within a group displaying a common vocabulary and terminology or with the objective of discovering a process rather than performance.
- No students had been supported with vocal, physical or acting technique classes during a rehearsal process.

#### **5.3.e. Scenes 12 to 15 - Winter Break**

As part of their reflection on their work during the first term, the students are asked to write a considered appraisal of their experience, having allowed the immediacy of the term to recede. They are enjoined to write what they 'honestly' feel, in the interest of their development as artists and craftspeople.

#### **5.3.f. Scene 17 - Jema's Day**

The purpose of the Classical Rehearsal Exercise is to offer the students the challenges of exploring the performance skills required for encompassing a classical (17<sup>th</sup> century) text, containing heightened and poetic language. During the first term a research and rehearsal process has been investigated for a contemporary naturalistic play – now the students are asked to make a far greater leap into performing a work requiring the muscularity of body and spirit which will encompass the emotional and vocal range required of the Elizabethan and Jacobean canon.

#### **5.3.g. Scene 18 - Transformation**

"...It is necessary to imagine one's own body. We have to have two experiences of ourselves, from the outside and at the same time be aware of everything on the inside. I must know exactly how I look. It is painful but it has to be..." (Chekhov, 1991) [quoted in the M.A. Students Handbook]

#### **5.3.h. Scene 20 - Ethnicity and Singing**

Singing classes are taught as part of the development of the vocal instrument and with the idea of “...incorporating the techniques of acting and character creation into the performing of a song...” (Student Handbook). The work of Steven Sondheim is often chosen, having all the qualities of sophistication, specificity and complexity of text and melody required for such an exercise.

The issue of ethnicity has not arisen before, to my knowledge, in the form presented here regarding singing. This incident, although made impressionistic for the purposes of my presentation, was so interesting and relevant, that I felt it should be narrated. The policy of ‘colour-blind’ casting for plays has been used by the School of Acting for some years.

#### **5.3.i. Scene 21 - Alexander Technique**

The educational philosopher, John Dewey, wrote the introductions to three of F. Matthias Alexander’s books, and studied the technique under Alexander himself, for fourteen years (Jackson, 1998).

#### **5.3.j. Scene 27 - Endings**

The ‘voices’ are taken, almost verbatim, from the students’ final Critical Re-appraisals, selected over a five year period, 2002-2007.

#### **5.3.k. Scene 28 - After Training (1)**

As in most acting training the course produces writers and directors as well as actors.

## **16. Keys to references for collected data (Pseudonyms)**

- Materials from Interviews are coded as 'I' followed by the interview number and the participant's initial/s.
- Material from reflective Critical Appraisals are coded 'CA' followed by the term number and the participant's initial/s.